TWO ANCIENT TREATISES ON PURGATORY.

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TWO ANCIENT TREATISES ON PURGATORY.

A REMEMBRANCE FOR THE LIVING TO PRAY FOR THE DEAD,

BY

FATHER JAMES MUMFORD, S.J.

AND

PURGATORY SURVEYED,

BY

FATHER RICHARD THIMELBY, S.J.

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INTRODUCTION.

A FRESH edition being called for of these two fine old books on Purgatory, they have been joined together and are re-issued in one volume. The Appendix to the first of the two treatises is no part of Father Mumford's work, but the present editor is responsible for it. It seemed to be wanted to bring the treatise up to date.

The second book was edited by Father William Henry Anderdon, and as to our loss he is no longer here to carry the book through the press again, as he would greatly have enjoyed to do, another has had to re-edit it for him. An explanation given by Father Anderdon must be now repeated. The references in the footnotes have not been verified; indeed, now that it is too late, it seems a pity that they were not omitted altogether. No one would expect, considering the date when the book was written, that the historical illustrations and quotations should have the exactness and precision of

modern criticism, and it would have been better that there should have been no pretence of proofs or references. The stories are given for the purpose of enforcing the pious lessons of the book, and the reader will recognize the ability with which Father Thimelby avails himself of their help. The vigour of the style makes one feel at every turn that the good Father must have been a very forcible preacher, though all that he says is not invariably in accordance with modern taste. For the matter of this treatise, he tells us that he was largely indebted to Father Stephen Binet, S.J., but he says of himself that he was "not a bare translator," and that no reader would be likely to think.

The two books are contemporary. Father Mumford's work first appeared in 1661, and Father Thimelby's in 1663. They were both reprinted (Father Mumford's for the third time) in St. Joseph's Ascetical Library in 1874. A short account of each author was prefixed to the editions of their books published in that year, and is now reproduced.

James Mumford, a native of the county of Norfolk, was born in the year 1606. His name is spelt in various ways. The Catalogue of the English Province S.J. for the year 1642, calls him "Momford." That for the year 1655 calls him, in

the body of it, "Jacobus Momfordus," whilst in the Index to the same it has "Mumfordus." Mr. Dodd, in a very brief notice of this Father, in his *Church History*, vol. iii. p. 321, calls him "Monford;" and Father Nathaniel Southwell, in his *Bibliotheca Scriptorum Societatis Jesu* (Rome, 1676), gives his name as "Jacobus Munfordus."

He entered the Society of Jesus in the year 1626, made his noviceship at Watten, and was professed of the four vows on the 29th of September, 1641. In the Catalogue of the Province for the year 1642, he appears as Father Minister of the English College S.J. at Liège, at the same time being Consultor of the College and teaching humanities. He was subsequently Rector of the College. In the Catalogue for the year 1655, he is entered as serving in the College of the Holy Apostles, which comprised the Jesuit missions in the counties of Essex, Sussex, Norfolk, and Cambridge. He is stated to be then forty-nine years of age, of weak health, with the mention of a goodly array of offices in which he had been previously employed, such as Rector, Confessarius, Spiritual Father, Socius to the Master of Novices, Minister, Consultor, Professor of Sacred Scripture and of Moral Theology.

About the year 1650 he was missionary priest at Norwich, the first of whose residence in that

city we have any record. In those evil days every priest in England lived in the constant expectation of confessorship, if not of martyrdom. Father Mumford had the honour of bearing insults and imprisonment for his Master. A few years before his death he was betrayed and apprehended at Norwich. He was paraded through the streets of the city by the *posse comitatus*, who carried his priestly vestments on their halberds, the Father being dressed in a priest's cloak. His interior joy at being called thus to suffer for Christ was so expressed by the cheerfulness of his countenance as to make no little impression on the people. After some days' imprisonment in the common jail, he was sent by boat, handcuffed and manacled, to Yarmouth; a journey that occupied a day and a night. Norwich, however, conceiving its rights and privileges injured by the transfer, he was brought back again, and, though kept in prison, was treated with less rigour. He had a separate cell allowed him, and the Catholics being permitted to bring him his breviary and other books, he occupied his time in writing his *Catholic Scripturist*, which was first published in Ghent in 1662, and has since been three times reprinted. After some months' imprisonment he was permitted to go at large on bail, but again and again he was obliged to reappear at the

bar as his judges came on circuit, till at length, his accuser having ceased to appear, and no legal proof of his priesthood being forthcoming, he was liberated.

Father Mumford died in England on the 9th of March, 1666, in his sixtieth year, and the twenty-sixth of his service of the English Mission.

Father Mumford had a most charitable love for the suffering souls in Purgatory, offering for them the satisfactions of all his labours and sufferings. To spread the same devotion he published a 12mo treatise in 1641, at St. Omers, called *A Remembrance for the Living to pray for the Dead*, and six years afterwards, at Liège, a Latin treatise entitled, *De misericordiâ fidelibus defunctis exhibendâ.* The latter was translated into French by Père Brignon, S.J., with Triessem's letters to Father Mumford (Paris, 1691). Besides these books and the *Catholic Scripturist*, Father Mumford wrote *A Vindication of St. Gregorie his Dialogues* (London, 1660), and *The Question of Questions, which, rightly resolved, resolveth all our questions in religion. This question is, Who ought to be our judge in all these our differences?* By Optatus Ductor (Ghent, 1658, and London, 1686).

The Annual Letters of the English Province for the year 1650–1 relates as follows the circumstances under which the latter of the two works

in behalf of the Holy Souls was reprinted at Cologne.

"Of Father Mumford's pious and instructive treatise on compassion for the Faithful Departed, the first edition has been nearly sold off, and William Triessem, the printer at Cologne, was about to publish a second edition, when a son of his, a little boy of four years old, was taken dangerously ill, and deriving no benefit from medical treatment, seemed drawing near his end. The printer, being a pious man, and according to his custom desiring to read some spiritual work, and seek consolation in religion, took up the first pious book that presented itself, which happened to be Father Mumford's treatise. Meeting with that part of it in which the author represents works of charity to the souls in Purgatory as very efficacious for obtaining all favours from God, the good man felt himself impelled to have recourse to this means of obtaining of God the recovery of his son. His trade gave shape to his purpose, and going that morning to the church, kneeling before the high altar, he made the following vow to Almighty God: 'O my God, if it pleases your Divine Majesty to restore my boy to health, I here vow to distribute one hundred copies of this treatise gratuitously to Religious and ecclesiastics, as the persons most likely to diffuse

the devotion it recommends.' Having made this vow, and returned home from his place of business to dinner, he heard with joy and gratitude that his son was asking for food, and the next day the boy's recovery was already far advanced. The father faithfully fulfilled his vow. The worthy publisher experienced a second time the efficacy of this work of charity. His wife fell dangerously ill, but recovered on his vowing to distribute gratis two hundred copies of the salutary treatise."

A later edition of the *Remembrance*, &c., bears the name of Paris as that of its place of publication. The first part was printed in 1660, in a 12mo volume of 480 pages. The second part, containing 138 pages, was published in the following year. On the title-page of the first part it is called, "The second edition, augmented and altered by the author, as the Preface declares." The Preface "to the Catholique Reader" begins thus:

"Almost twenty years are past since I composed a small treatise as a *Remembrance for the Living to pray for the Dead*. But this unfortunate island began presently to be almost as violently tossed within by the waves of sedition and rebellion, as it is battered without by the restless billows of its encircling ocean. Whence that little work, as it was made and printed beyond the sea, so also all the copies

of it were almost dispersed among such Catholiques as the fury of those times had enforced to leave their native country. Times changing, a second edition seemed expedient." From this we gather, what Father Nathaniel Southwell distinctly says, that this second edition was really printed in London, though it bears the imprint of Paris.

The first part is not now reprinted. It is not only controversial, and therefore out of keeping with the purpose of a purely ascetical book, but the chief point confuted is a curious error long since forgotten, that "souls, once detained in Purgatory, be not thence deliverable before the last General Resurrection."

Of the work that is now reproduced, the author says, in the same Preface, "This second part is properly that which may be truly said to have a second edition in English, but yet not without some alteration and increase, particularly by some additions taken out of my larger Latin treatise, which hath been translated into several languages. The whole scope of it is to inflame the will towards that never sufficiently commendable devotion of praying for the dead. And because this part is proper for such as seriously desire to exercise themselves in practice of piety, and are either unable or unwilling to attend to school disputations

concerning points in which already they are as well settled as our learnedest forefathers cared to be, I have thought fit to print it in a volume apart, yet so as to account it a part of this whole work (to which it may be joined by those who please) that all may understand nothing to be there delivered by me for increase of piety, which in my first part hath not been proved to be solidly grounded in the exactest rigour of divinity."

This book has been translated into French by the Abbé Bouix, who has prefixed it to the treatise of St. Catherine of Genoa, giving it at the same time the high praise that it is the best treatise with which he is acquainted on the subject of which it treats. It would be hard that it should be more accessible to foreign readers than to the author's fellow-countrymen for whose edification it was written.

Thimelby, or Thimbleby, was the name of an ancient knightly family, seated at Pelham in Lincolnshire, in the reign of Edward III.[1] Towards the end of the fifteenth century, Richard Thimelby married the heiress of Sir Andrew Lutterell, knight, of Irnham in the same county. This lady brought with her, to the family into which she married,

[1] Clifford's *History of Tixall*, p. 223.

besides a claim to the barony of Lutterell, the manor of Irnham, which continued in Catholic hands until comparatively recent times. Their son, Richard Thimelby, married a daughter of Mrs. Brooksby,[1] daughter of Lord Vaux of Harrowden. This Eleanor Brooksby, and her sister Anne Vaux, were Father Henry Garnet's brave and devoted benefactresses. Two of Eleanor Brooksby's grand-daughters, Winefred and Frances Thimelby, joined the English Augustinianesses at Louvain; entering St. Monica's Convent in 1634 and 1642: and in 1668 Sister Winefred became Prioress of that devout and venerable house. Henry Thimelby, the younger brother of these two religious, married Gertrude, daughter of Walter, first Lord Aston of Forfar; and, on her husband's death, she entered religion in the same convent. Her niece, Catherine Aston, the daughter of her brother Herbert Aston and of Catherine Thimelby his wife, entered St. Monica's at the same time. Elizabeth, another sister, married Richard Conquest, of Houghton Conquest in Bedfordshire; and on the death, without issue, of her eldest brother's grand-daughter, Mary the wife of Thomas Giffard of Chillington, the property passed to the Conquests. Mary Conquest, heiress of the last of that name (Benedict

[1] *Troubles of our Catholic Forefathers*, series 1, pp. 156, 369.

Conquest, who died in 1753), married Lord Arundell of Wardour; and thus Irnham passed to the Cliffords through her daughter Eleanor, wife of Lord Clifford of Ugbrooke..

Winefred, Frances, Catherine, and Elizabeth Thimelby had two brothers besides Henry, already mentioned. The eldest was Sir John Thimelby, knight, with whose son John the male line of the Thimelbys expired. The other was the translator of the present work, Richard Thimelby, who entered the Society of Jesus in 1631, at the age of seventeen. In those times few religious men were called by their own names, and that by which Father Richard Thimelby was generally known was Ashby. He spent nearly fifty years in the labours of the Society, and held many important offices. He taught Philosophy at the English College at Liège, and Polemical or Controversial Theology, of which in those days there was a professorship distinct from that of Dogmatic Theology. For sixteen years he laboured on the English Mission, and for some time he was Superior of the Jesuits in Lincolnshire, his native county, which was then known in the Society as "the Residence of St. Dominic." From this he passed, in 1666, to the English Novitiate at Watten in Flanders, where he was Rector and Master of Novices for six years.

On the 28th of August, 1672, he was transferred to the English College at St. Omers, the Rectorship of which he held for another period of six years. He was relieved of this charge some months before his death, which took place at St. Omers on the 7th of January, 1679–80. This good Father was professed of the four vows, November 22, 1646. The records of the Society speak in the highest terms of praise of his learning, prudence, and religious spirit; but the list of the offices he held, speaks more eloquently than words of the esteem in which he was held as a spiritual man.

Several other Catholics of the name are mentioned, but their connection with this branch of the family is not clear. Edward Thimbelby, who died in 1690, Provost of St. Gery or Gaugericus in Cambray, may have been another brother. Three officers of the Royal army, Charles, Robert, Nicholas Thimelby, lost their lives in the Civil War. There was one Gabriel Thimelby, who died a still more glorious death, and may be called a martyr, as he is recorded to have died in prison in the year 1586. Unfortunately, all that we know of him is, that he was once a student in the College at Rheims.

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A REMEMBRANCE FOR THE LIVING
TO PRAY FOR THE DEAD.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

THE FIRST MOTIVE TO PRAY FOR THE SOULS IN PURGATORY, WHICH IS, THE GREATNESS OF THE SENSIBLE PAINS THEY SUFFER.

NATURE doth teach us, that the most forcible eloquence to move compassion is that which setteth forth the greatness of our misery. The miseries which these poor souls suffer are reduced to two. The one, *pœna sensus*, which is the sensible pain they feel, caused by the excessive bitterness of their torments. The other is called *pœna damni*, which is that inexplicable anguish of mind and grief, arising from the lively apprehension of the loss of God, which for a time they are to sustain; to which we may add the long continuance of their torments. From these three we will draw the motives, which (if they be well pondered) may make the hardest Pharaoh-like heart in the world to take some compassion on these poor souls.

2. The first motive, then, is the greatness of that sensible pain, caused by the excessive sharpness of their torments. How great and how bitter the torments be, speaking of that which happeneth for the most part, and not that which sometimes may

happen to some few innocent souls (whose sins were small, and whose penance great), how great, I say, these torments are, speaking of them as they are for the most part, may be showed.

3. First. Because the torments of Purgatory exceed all, even the very greatest, torments of this life. St. Austin, upon these words of St. Paul, "But they shall be saved, yet so as by fire," writeth thus:[1] "Because St. Paul doth say that these men 'shall be saved, yet so as by fire,' therefore this fire is contemned; but surely, although they shall be saved by it, yet this fire is more grievous than whatsoever a man can suffer in this life; albeit you know how great and how intolerable things men have suffered, or may suffer." And the same St. Austin saith, "This fire, I tell you, though it be not everlasting, yet it is passing grievous, for it doth far pass all pains that any man can suffer in this life. Never was there yet found out so great a pain in flesh as that is, though martyrs have suffered strange torments, and many malefactors exceeding great punishments."[2] Again, the same holy Father maketh us a very excellent and necessary exhortation, out of this his so often delivered doctrine. "Some men," saith he, "used to say, I care not greatly how long I stay in this passing fire, seeing that at last I shall attain to life everlasting. But alas, dear brother, let no man say thus, because this Purgatory fire is more sharp than any punishment which in this life can be seen, imagined, or felt. He that now will be

[1] On Psalm xxxvii.
[2] *De vera et falsa Pœnit.* cap. xviii.

loth to put one of his fingers into burning fire, ought to fear the torment of that fire."

4. Other holy Doctors have had the like feeling of this matter. The great St. Gregory writeth thus on the third Penitential Psalm: "I know that after this life some must be cleansed by purging fire, and others must receive sentence of eternal damnation; but because I esteem that purging fire, though it be transitory, to be more intolerable than all the tribulation that in this life can be suffered, I greatly fear to be purged in the wrath of transitory vengeance." And Venerable Bede, on the same Psalm, affirmeth that "no torture either of the martyrs or malefactors can be compared with the pains of Purgatory."

5. Secondly. It is an opinion not improbable, that the very least torment in Purgatory doth surpass the very greatest in this world. Of this opinion is our learned St. Anselm, who speaking of these torments, saith: "Of the which the least is bigger than the biggest which in this life can be devised."[1] Amongst the Epistles of St. Austin there is one which some think St. Cyril to have written, in which there be these most fearful words: "There is not a man living who had not rather be tormented with all the pains and torments together which all the men in the world, from Adam until this time, have suffered, than be for one day tormented with the least pain which is either in Hell or Purgatory."[2] Yea, St. Thomas, prince of the divines, doth prove this to be most true. "In Purgatory," saith he, "there is a double

[1] "De quibus minimum majus est quam maximum quod in hac vita excogitari potest" (*Elucidat.*).

[2] Epist. ccvi.

pain. The one from the loss of God; the other is the sensible pain. And according to both these pains, the least pain in Purgatory exceeds the greatest pain of this life."[1] So he. Out of which discourse it follows that there is not any one in Purgatory who doth not, every instant that he is there, suffer more than is or can be suffered in this world, though all miseries should meet in one. Others may be of a contrary opinion, but their opinion may be perhaps more contrary to truth.

6. Thirdly. It is an opinion most commonly received amongst the greatest divines, that the torments of Purgatory, for the time they last, be as grievous as the torments of Hell. "The pains of Hell and Purgatory be of one greatness; but those of Hell expect no end, those of Purgatory have an end," saith the author of the Epistle which we have cited out of St. Austin. And St. Thomas, in the place cited: "It is the same fire which torments the just in Purgatory and the damned in Hell."[2] These opinions I thought good to set down, not as if they were articles of faith (for then they were not opinions), but to the end we may see what feeling these great Saints and Doctors of God's Church have had of this point. And I add—

7. Fourthly. That reason itself, enlightened by faith, doth convince these torments to be exceeding great, because these souls, though they be saved, "shall be saved, yet so as by fire."[3] Now, of all the torments which can be suffered, none is so

[1] Suppl. q. 72. a. 1. [2] Q. 69. a. 8.
[3] 1 Cor. iii. 15.

painful as that of fire, and perhaps all the other torments which our world hath can scarce so bitterly torture a poor creature as it would be tortured, if it were possible for us to be kept without consuming in the midst of the merciless flames of a glass furnace, the fire of which would soon, as it were, penetrate itself with the very inmost parts of that afflicted wretch; his bones would glow like red-hot bars of iron, his marrow would scorch him more fiercely than melted lead, his blood would boil more furiously than high-seething oil, his nails, his teeth, his gristles, his very skull would be like plates of bright flaming brass, all on burning fire. But alas! dear brother, there be many differences between our hottest fire and the scorching flames of Purgatory. Our fire was created by God merely for our comfort and commodity; that fire is made for no other end than to afflict, pain, and torment those guilty souls. Our fire, by being out of the proper sphere, by being mingled with grosser and duller elements, by contrary qualities which be round about it, and the contrariety which it findeth in the matter it feedeth on, hath the native force, activity, and fierceness much abated. That fire hath not one of these hindrances, but exerciseth continually in the highest degree all the force of its native fury. In fine, our fire in comparison of that fire, by holy Doctors, and namely by our worthy countryman, Blessed Thomas More, in the end of his rare work called the *Supplication of the Soul*, &c., is styled and esteemed a kind of "painted fire rather than true fire."

8. Fifthly. The more learned may ponder atten-

tively those words of the Angelical Doctor, St. Thomas, in the place above cited. "Seeing that," saith he, "grief is not the hurt itself, but the feeling of the hurt, every man grieves so much the more for any hurt by how much he is more sensible; whence such hurts as are caused in parts more sensible cause great grief. And because the whole sensitive faculty of the body is from the soul, therefore if any hurtful agent be elevated to act upon the soul itself, she must necessarily be most grievously afflicted. Seeing, therefore, the soul doth suffer from Purgatory fire, therefore the pain of Purgatory must needs be such as surpasses all the pain of this life." All this St. Thomas. And even those few Doctors who deny true fire in Purgatory, grant such spiritual grief in the soul as exceeds all torments. And, therefore, what we have said in contemplating the torment of true fire will still fall short of expressing the truth. These considerations made the devout St. Bernard break into these pathetical words: "Oh, would to God some man would now beforehand provide for my head abundance of water, and to my eyes a fountain of tears, for so perhaps the burning fire would take no hold where running tears had cleansed before."[1]

9. Two other considerations may be added unto these: the one is the cause why these torments are inflicted, which is the making of due satisfaction for sin, which though it be but venial, yet being that it is an offence of God, is a thing so detestable, that it cannot be committed either for the gaining of ten

[1] *De Tribul.* xvi. and lv. on the Canticles.

thousand worlds, or the avoiding of the greatest evil possible; because the goodness of God is not to be violated and displeased, His Sacred Majesty is not the least to be dishonoured (being that it is sovereign and infinite) for the good of any inferior creature that is, or may be. Wherefore the so light commission of so many venial sins as men daily and hourly commit cannot be expiated but by punishment of a higher rank than we can imagine. And this is the reason why the learned Doctors and holiest Saints, who had most light of God's greatness, had also greatest feeling of the pains due to every little offence of so infinite a nature; and this is the reason why they, whose understandings are either clouded with natural ignorance, or obscured with sinful affections, or wholly darkened with heresy, are as dull in apprehending these pains as they are blockish in forming a worthy conceit of God's infinite goodness and supreme sovereignty.

10. The other thing here considerable is, that the day of mercy ending with the day of our life, we are after to expect nothing else but justice; and therefore our Saviour doth verily say unto us, that we shall not go out of this prison "until we have paid the last farthing."[1] Which is a terrible consideration, if we have a due feeling of our debts; whereunto what we are to say in the third chapter will exceedingly help. Neither can Protestants be scandalized at what hath here been said, if they remember that according to their faith all sins are mortal, and therefore deserve everlasting pains.

[1] St. Matt. v. 26.

11. Well, then, these distressed souls suffering such things as none who hath the heart of a man could endure to see a dog suffer if he could ease him; and these souls being the souls of our brethren, the souls of Christ's brethren, the souls which He loved so dearly that He most joyfully shed the very last drop of Blood in His Body for their sakes, how can we thus slight their complaints with a deaf ear? Oh, if we were in this pitiful case, how hotly should we cite those words of our Saviour, that voice, that outcry of nature herself, "Whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do you also to them."[1] Denis the Carthusian relateth the words of one who by Divine revelation was admitted to see these torments, and indeed they be worth relating. "God is my witness," saith he, "that if I did see any man, though this man had as cruelly as man could either misused, tortured, or killed my dearest friends, and done me all the mischief which one man could do to another, yet if I did see this man condemned to such pains as there (in Purgatory) I beheld, I would a thousand times, if it could be done, suffer death for his delivery."[2] Such force hath this consideration, lively apprehended.

[1] St. Matt. vii. 12. [2] *De Judic. Anim.* art. 23.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

THE SECOND MOTIVE, DRAWN FROM THE INTOLERABLE PAINS THE SOULS SUFFER BY BEING BANISHED FROM THE SIGHT OF GOD.

To understand how great a pain it is to be banished, though but for a time, from the face of God, is a thing wholly impossible, until we come to know what an infinite good it is to possess God; but we may have some little scantling of it by these considerations.

2. The first consideration. All the joy, pleasure, dainties, riches, and honours of this world, yea, and of a million of worlds, though they were a million times more excellent than this world is, and all this joy and happiness were eternal; yet all this put together, and enjoyed as perfectly as might be, is a thing noways comparable to that happiness which the possession of God for only one moment doth bring with it; so that to be deprived of this possession, debarred of that happiness, restrained of this bliss (when we are in a state capable of it, and requiring it), is a misery without all comparison greater than should be the loss of all the riches, honours, and pleasures which the eternal possession of a million of worlds a million of times more

pleasant than our world could afford. What grief then must the loss of this good cause in a soul that knoweth her loss?

3. The second consideration. All the torments of this world, though they were a thousand times greater, ought, according to right reason, to be joyfully suffered, if by the suffering of them altogether we might be able to purchase the sight of God but for one moment; for to see God is such a good, that it would seem cheap bought with all those evils; His sight being good of a far higher order than any evil can be an evil. Hence it followeth that the suffering (though but for a moment) the loss of this good is a misery inconceptible. How clear is this, and yet how little understood!

4. The third consideration may be taken from the lively and clear manner with which these souls have their whole mind and attention fast bent, both night and day, upon the greatness of this so infinite a loss. We know by experience that in matter of pain, anguish, and misery, nothing torments more than wholly to give ourselves over, or rather to be carried by the violence of them, to the continual consideration of the bitterness of our afflictions. All other comforts which may be thought on for the ease of their desolate souls are no more than enough to keep their minds in a perfect patience, amidst a world of so great miseries.

5. The fourth consideration. The souls do most perfectly love God, and they do penetrate, in a far more perfect manner than they could do in this life,

the reasons (which are all most forcible) moving to love that infinite goodness. Wherefore, seeing themselves on the one side in an estate capable of enjoying God, and on the other debarred of enjoying Him (Whom they love so affectionately that it is a death to be separated from Him), their minds are, as it were, torn asunder on the rack of love. "Love is as strong as death. Jealousy as hard as Hell, the lamps thereof are fire and flames. Many waters cannot quench charity, neither can the floods drown."[1] Even in this world, where we have so little knowledge of God in our understanding, and where we follow this knowledge so faintly with our wills, some choice servants of God suffer strange things in this kind through the absence of their Beloved, though as yet they are not in an estate fit to enjoy Him. Father Baptista Sanctius, of the Society of Jesus, was one of these. For when he manifested his conscience unto his Superior, he professed he really was of opinion that very grief would kill him out of hand if he could come to know for certain that his life should be prolonged for the space of but one whole day, so truly strong as death was that love which inflamed his heart to the enjoying of his Beloved.[2] Few can believe, and few can understand this; but those who indeed love God see it with their eyes. If the ruthful moans of such true lovers deserve not compassion, there is no such thing as they call mercy in the world.

6. The fifth consideration. These souls know they are deprived of this infinite good (which they

Cant. viii. 6, 7. [2] Ludov. de Ponte, *Vita P. Baltas.* cap. xvii.

so ardently love) for no other cause but their own fault, their own carelessly committed sins; sins which did offend and affront this infinite goodness, which now they love so tenderly. And this it is which cutteth as deep as the sharpest edge of grief can cut into the softest heart, which weepeth with tears of blood as often as it thinks (and it can never cease from thinking) that it was not only a trifle which separated it in this manner from God, but a wickedness abominable in His sight, an offence of such an Excellency, a contempt of such a Majesty, a displeasure of such a Goodness, an ingratitude against such a Benefactor. Ah, this it is that goeth to their very heart; this all the powers of their souls bewail, and lament to the uttermost of their power, with tears which neither can nor will admit of comfort until due satisfaction be made, even to the least and last farthing.

7. The sixth and last consideration differeth in this from the former, that as these souls are tormented with such unspeakable grief whilst they ponder the miseries of this banishment for their offences, as they are displeasing to Him Whom they so purely love; so they are also put on a new torture, when out of natural love unto themselves (which now well-ordered charity doth much increase) they attentively consider and deeply penetrate what it is to be deprived of such a good, such a joy, such a bliss, for such a small, such a no good, such a mischievous evil as they sinned for; a pleasure so vain, so short, so ugly, so irrational, and so pernicious to their souls; and yet, to use their

language, such was my folly (ah, wretch, not only miserable, but mad!) as to forego even such a good, for such a bare, such a shameful, such a pestiferous trifle as that was; so many degrees of glory, which would have made me so happy for all eternity, are wholly and irrecoverably lost for a pure (ah, most impure) nothing! How often was I inspired to do this thing, and yet, &c. These, and far more miserable than these, be the anguishes of those souls, far greater than either those of Esau selling his birthright for a mess of pottage, or those of Adam for making away Paradise for the taste of an apple, or any other this world ever had, or shall have.

8. Sum up now in thy mind all these considerations together, and think in what a sea of sorrows that heart must be into which day and night so great and so many floods do unlade their waves; and canst not thou find in thy heart to afford them some slight relief? "He that hath the substance of this world, and shall see his brother in need, and shall put up his bowels from him, how doth the charity of God abide in him?"[1] He saith not, how doth the charity towards his neighbour, but how doth the charity of God remain in him? And if thou, whosoever thou art, thus shuttest thy bowels in a necessity, as extreme almost as a necessity can be, of thy own and Christ's brother, I am sure that the charity of thy neighbour hath no place in thee. But as for charity towards God, it is not I, but St. John, who doth, as it were denying, ask, "How doth the charity of God remain in thee?"

[1] 1 St. John iii. 17.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

THE THIRD MOTIVE, TAKEN FROM THE LONG TIME THAT THESE PAINS DO ENDURE.

If these pains were to be ended in a short space, our hard-heartedness might then have some excuse; but (speaking still of what happeneth for the most part) it is a thing scarce to be doubted of, that they continue very long; for the holy Church is accustomed to keep the anniversaries of those who died a hundred or two hundred years ago. Whence it appeareth that there is reason to fear that many have a long stay in Purgatory. The learned Bellarmine[1] doth recount some histories very authentical (as he excellently proveth) out of which appeareth that divers souls are condemned to Purgatory even till the Day of Judgment. And Tertullian, speaking of these pains of Purgatory, saith, "Thou shalt not depart perhaps until the day of thy resurrection."[2]

2. Now, if we require why God doth hold this manner of proceeding, in rather detaining us a long time in our punishments than in adding to the bitterness of our torments that which is taken out in length of time, we can define no other reason

[1] *De Gemit. Columb.* cap. ii. [2] *De Anima*, cap. xvii.

than that our sins have deserved this misery also, and men would little apprehend to suffer all that could be suffered in one moment, if the next moment they were to be eternally happy; and therefore God, Who in His severe judgment had a merciful regard to that which would work most with our dull apprehensions, did ordain that (as St. Augustine speaketh) —"So great as the matter of our sins shall have been, so long should be the stay of our passage."[1] The best way, therefore, to make us have some conceit of the long continuance of these pains, is to see how great the matter uses to be on which they feed, that is, what a kind of quantity the sins of men use most commonly to amount to.

3. A little arithmetic will give us a great insight in this matter. The just man is said to sin seven times a day, wherefore we may easily allow thrice more a day to one of those whom we call good and honest men, such as the world hath but few of; such a man, therefore, as this is, doth sin (venially) ten times a day, taking one day with another. The days in a whole year are three hundred and sixty-five; wherefore he who every day sinneth ten times, must at the year's end have sinned ten times as often as there be days in a year; which sum is easily found out by only putting one cypher to the number of the days in the year, which are 365; add now one cypher, and we shall have 3,650. So that the sins of this good man, even in one year, come to no less than three thousand six hundred and

[1] "Quanta fuerit peccati materia, tanta esset transeunti mora" (Hom. xv. ex l. hom.).

fifty. But if this honest man should live, even in this good manner, ten years, he should at ten years' end have committed the former sum ten times, because he doth double it every year; which sum also is easily had by adding one cypher to the former sum of 3,650, which if we do, we do find 36,500. What a thing is this? An innocent man—not a man, but a youth—doth commit thirty-six thousand and five hundred sins, all in ten years; wherefore, if the youth should for ten years more continue this his virtuous course of life, he would double the sins of his former life, and make them amount to seventy-three thousand before he came to be a middle-aged man. "Oh," saith St. Augustine, "perhaps when thou dost consider a little sin apart, and by itself, thou dost slight it: yet," saith he, "if thou contemnest thy little sins when thou dost weigh them, yet tremble when thou dost number them."[1]

4. Let us reflect now a little, before we go any further, what a kind of Purgatory this man—a man not fully of middle age, a man very pious, a man who never committed one mortal sin—would be liable unto if he should die at this age; for, perhaps, of those seventy-three thousand sins he hath not fully satisfied for the odd three thousand, or if he hath he hath done more than most men use to do, for of all miseries one of the greatest is that those who sin most have least care to satisfy for their sins. Now what a Purgatory, think you, seventy

[1] "Si contemnis quando appendis, expavesce quando numeras" (*In Epist. Joan.* tract. i.).

thousand sins will deserve? "Thy judgments (O God) are a deep bottomless pit."[1]

5. But why put we a course which so seldom happens? The ordinary case of man is to commit many and enormous mortal sins, and venial without all scruple, and consequently without all number. Yea, many hold on this strain until they come to be very old, and unable by reason of their years, and unwilling by reason of their ill habits, to do any penance; and so they content themselves with spending some few hours to deplore and confess those sins, which amount to far more thousands than there be minutes in the hours which they spend in lamenting them. Consider now how insufficient the grief of one minute is to cancel out all the pains due to a whole thousand of sins, and many of them very enormous.

6. There is also another thing in this reckoning to be much reflected on—that he who should have but one only mortal sin would be liable, after the forgiveness of it, to a punishment far different (and God knows how far) from that which he is liable unto who hath only venial sins to satisfy for, though their number be exceeding great; for if one mortal sin, before it be forgiven, be liable unto an eternity of punishment, and most bitter punishment—and, consequently, to such a punishment as all the venial sins a man can commit, would never deserve the hundred thousand part of it—I will leave it to a right valuing judgment to esteem how much more pain God is like to impose upon him who hath this

[1] Psalm xxxv. 7.

one forgiven mortal sin to satisfy for, than on him who hath only venial sins, and those also forgiven, to satisfy for, though the number of them should be exceeding great. Well, then, if one mortal sin bringeth with it such a dreadful Purgatory, how are they like to be dealt withal who every day run upon the score, and thus continue not for many days but years together, during which time, they being always in sin, never make satisfaction for the least they commit. If holy David said: "My iniquities have overtaken me, and I was not able to see them (they were so many): they are multiplied above the hairs of my head,"[1] what may these men ("who drink up iniquity like water"[2]) think of the multitude of their sins, who perhaps have a hundred for David's one? Such like considerations as these made the devout St. Bonaventure cry out: "I have sinned above the number of the sands of the sea. How then shall I number that which is without number? How shall I suffice, when I shall be enforced to pay my debt to the very last farthing?"[3]

7. But let us mark a little what satisfaction is usually made by those who stand in so great need of it. The ordinary ways to satisfy be these—fasting, prayer, and alms-deeds, and sometimes by Indulgences; and all these things must be done in the state of grace, in which these men are seldom long together, and therefore most of these works (of which they do so few) come wholly to be lost, but when they are not thus cast away, let us see what

[1] Psalm xxix. 13. [2] Job xv. 16.
[3] *In Parvo Bono.*

they will come to. As for fasting, when it cannot be shifted off by any pretence, fast they do, but God knows how many times they lose either the whole or the greater part of this good work; for they have so many inventions to sweeten their fasts, with such variety of dainty dishes, that it is much to be feared lest, in place of satisfying for their old sins, they commit new sins of gluttony, which require a new satisfaction. Now, for prayer, it is commonly performed by them with so many distractions, irreverences, and other imperfections, that the world may seem not to go amiss, if there be enough of their prayers made so well that it may suffice to make due recompense for that which is made so ill. Alms-deeds the poor cannot give and the rich will not, for they do live, and mean ever to live, say what you will, at so high a rate, that they think they do a great matter if they can get enough honestly to maintain their bravery and to discharge their debts, for as for paying the debts they owe to God, they are resolved that He shall be paid last. Indulgences, indeed, are one of the great mercies of God, which in how great need we stand of, any man of judgment will see clearly by this whole discourse, but such is either the infidelity or strange carelessness of most men (especially of such as have most need), that perhaps the gross neglect of them may well be reckoned for one of the chief causes why many broil so long in the flames of Purgatory.

8. It is now high time to end this discourse, and I humbly and earnestly beseech the reader to

take sometimes into his consideration the points mentioned, as well for his own spiritual profit as for the relief of his poor brethren's souls burning in Purgatory flames, and supplicating to his charity for succour by those affectionate words of St. Paul: "Remember them that are in bands, as if you were bound with them."[1]

[1] Hebrews xiii. 3.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

THAT FOR THE LOVE WE BEAR TO GOD, WE OUGHT TO BE MUCH MOVED TO HELP THE SOULS IN PURGATORY.

HITHERTO we have only treated of such motives as charity towards our neighbour doth force upon us; now we will pass to the motives which pure charity towards God doth present unto us, and afterwards we will come to those motives which well-ordered charity towards ourselves doth offer us. To our present purpose, then. A soul which is enamoured on perfection, and desireth to please God in the highest manner, hath very many and efficacious motives to make her forward to aid the souls in Purgatory.

2. The first motive. God is of an excellency, worth, and perfection so infinite, that He deserveth all possible love and honour. This consideration maketh us cast about to see how we may procure that this Excellency may be more perfectly loved and glorified; wherefore, considering that on earth we know Him so imperfectly, and love Him so coldly, and glorify Him so meanly, we rest little satisfied with all which can be done by us on earth, and so we seek yet further, and consider how

perfectly God is known by the Blessed in Heaven—how they love that Goodness, how they glorify that Majesty. Hence we burn with an ardent desire that God in this sublime manner be more known, loved, and honoured: and then, marking that it is in our power to procure this by obtaining the delivery of some soul or souls out of Purgatory, which, being freed from thence by our means, would for ever love and honour God in that most perfect manner. Hence we break forth into those amorous words: "Bring my soul out of prison (O Lord), that I may praise Thy name."[1] And we bend ourselves wholly to procure the deliverance of these souls out of pure love to Almighty God.

3. The second motive. When we consider our infinite obligations to God for His manifold benefits showered down upon us, and being inflamed with a restless desire of showing ourselves truly grateful, though wholly unable during the time of this mortal life to thank Him as it is fitting, we use the best means we can devise to procure worthy thanks to be given Him by some soul or souls freed by our means, which both day and night may praise, extol, and thank this Divine Goodness.

4. The third motive. When we consider how great a Majesty, how infinite a Goodness, how great a Benefactor we have so often and so grievously offended, we feel in ourselves a strong and working desire of repairing this dishonour done to that Majesty, and cancelling our own ingratitude by the greatest honour we can invent to procure, and

[1] Psalm cxli. 8.

therefore we employ cheerfully our best good deeds in working the releasement of as many souls as we can, that, by their perpetual glorifying God, a more perfect recompense may be made for the dishonour we have done Him.

5. The fourth motive is drawn out of the precedent, put together in this manner. God, Whose excellency is so great, Whose wisdom so infinite, Whose benefits so manifold, Whom I am obliged to satisfy for so many and so great sins—this God, I say, taketh all that is done unto His brethren for His sake as gratefully as if it were done unto Himself, as Christ hath taught us in plain words: "Amen, I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these My least brethren, you did it to Me."[1] How can I then hold myself from using any means by which I may perform a thing as grateful to my dear Lord as if He had endured the excessive torments of Purgatory and I had released Him? My heart is hard, but I must confess that this consideration doth make it yield, and if there were no argument but this, this alone might convince all men.

[1] St. Matt. xxv. 40.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

THAT BY OFFERING OUR ACTIONS FOR THE SOULS IN PURGATORY, WE PURCHASE MANY GREAT COMMODITIES FOR OURSELVES AND SUSTAIN NO INCOMMODITY.

To make this title good, I will show that by this devotion we do not merit less, but more. Secondly, that thus our actions are not less, but more impetratory. Thirdly, that thus we do not less, but more satisfy for our sins. Fourthly, that thus we have great hope of escaping either all or part of the pains of Purgatory. Fifthly, that thus we do nothing against charity towards ourselves; but that we should do against the perfection of this charity if we should not thus offer our actions for the souls in Purgatory. All these five points we will, by God's grace, endeavour to make clear in the next ensuing chapters, treating a part of every one of them, in order, in a peculiar chapter; and that all which hereafter we may have to say may be better understood, we will spend this present chapter in declaring how the business doth pass when we offer any works for the souls in Purgatory.

2. It is, therefore, most diligently to be noted, as the ground of all we are to say, that our virtuous

actions may have these three several properties together. They may be meritorious, they may be impetratory, they may be satisfactory. They are meritorious when they are good works performed in the grace of God, having an eternal reward promised unto them. They are impetratory, for they do obtain, besides the crown of justice which the just Judge layeth up for them against the day of His coming,[1] many other favours bestowed upon them by the bountiful hand of our merciful Father; as, for example, the life of our friend, as David hoped to obtain when he prayed and wept, and "kept a fast, and going in by himself lay upon the ground,"[2] to beg the life of his son; or the conversion of others, as the prayer made by St. Stephen did obtain of God the conversion of St. Paul,[3] as St. Augustine teacheth; in fine, "Ask, and it shall be given unto you."[4] Our good works also are satisfactory, either always (as many excellent divines hold) or (as all hold) if they be works of any labour, pain, or difficulty, as fasting, prayer, and alms-deeds; yea, what good works are there which our corrupted nature feeleth not difficulty in? Let us see what foundation this ground of our discourse hath in Holy Scripture.

3. That our good works are meritorious is expressly taught in the sixth chapter of St. Matthew; and those good works are put by name which make more to our purpose, to wit, fasting, prayer, and alms-deeds. The reward of which works we are

[1] 2 Timothy iv. 8. [2] 2 Kings xii. 16. [3] Acts vii. 59.
[4] St. Luke xi. 9.

there said to lose if we do them publicly, out of vanity; but if thou doest them in humble secrecy, "Thy Father, Who seeth in secret, will repay thee." And lest any man should think that only great works should be rewarded, our Saviour in plain terms doth tell us, that he who giveth but a cup of cold water shall not want his reward, if it be done for His sake; and we may see how mindful our Lord is of His promise, for in the Last Judgment Day, to those who shall have done such good works as these are, He will say, "Come, ye blessed of My Father, possess you the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave Me to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me to drink."[1] Mark how God doth give them Heaven for the doing of good works. "Possess," saith He, "the Kingdom. For you gave Me to eat, to drink," &c. And somewhat before in the same chapter: "Because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will place thee over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."[2] Mark the causal: "Because thou hast been faithful." This is the cause for which Christ saith He giveth Heaven. Let Luther, let Calvin, let those who care for no good works, name what other cause they please.

4. That our good works are impetratory, that is, have virtue to move the liberality, goodness, and mercy of God, to bestow, in regard of them, the grant of many favours, when by prayer they are offered up for this end (for if they be not thus offered

[1] St. Matt. xxv. 34, 35. [2] St. Matt. xxv. 21.

up, as they are joined and applied to this end by prayer, perhaps not any good works at all are impetratory, excepting only prayer itself: and not all prayer, but such as containeth some petition); that, I say, good works are impetratory, when they are thus joined with prayer, is evidently proved out of that part of David, who with the prayer made for his son's life, joined also other works of penance, lying on the ground, fasting, &c. "While the child," saith he, "was yet alive, I fasted and wept for him; but now that he is dead, why should I fast?"[1]

5. That our good works are satisfactory, that is, they (performed and dignified by grace granted through Christ's merits) have virtue to cancel sin, and the pains due to sin, is most clear in Scripture; and heretics, if lothness to make satisfaction for their sins do not blind them, cannot but see it. "Alms delivereth from death, and the same is that which purgeth away sins, and maketh to find mercy and life everlasting."[2] "Alms deliver from all sin, and from death, and will not suffer the soul to go into darkness."[3] "Water quencheth a flaming fire, and alms resisteth sins."[4] In the eleventh chapter of St. Luke, our Saviour, speaking to the Scribes and Pharisees, saith that they shall be condemned in the Day of Judgment; that the blood of all the Prophets slain from the beginning of this world shall be required at their hands; and six times, one after another, He pronounceth woe against them;

[1] 2 Kings xii. 22, 23. [2] Tobias xii. 9. [3] Tobias iv. 11. [4] Ecclus. iii. 33.

and to those unclean men, our Saviour at the very same time said, "But yet that which remaineth, give alms; and behold all things are clean unto you;"[1] sinful people as you are. "Wherefore let my counsel be acceptable to thee" (it is the most excellent counsel of the Prophet Daniel), "and redeem thou thy sins with alms, and thy iniquities with works of mercy."[2]

6. This being thus declared, it may easily be understood how things do pass when we do offer up any work for the souls in Purgatory. For, first, the good work thus offered up is meritorious, and therefore we always merit by it; neither can we give this merit away, because reward is only due, and Scripture promiseth it to those only who shall have done well: wherefore we lose not the least parcel of the merit of good works if we do them for the souls in Purgatory—yea, we much increase it, as shall be showed. Secondly, the good work thus offered is impetratory, that is, it is apt to move God's mercy to grant that favour for obtaining of which it is offered up: as a happy death, peace among Christians, the long and happy life of our noble King, or such-like things. Now the obtaining of all these requests is not the least hindered, but much (as we shall show) furthered, though these works which we do be given to the souls in Purgatory, and offered up to God for the satisfaction of the pains due unto their sins not duly satisfied for. Thirdly, and lastly, this good work which we offer for the souls in Purgatory is satisfactory, and

[1] St. Luke xi. 41. [2] Daniel iv. 24.

according to this satisfactory virtue which it hath (and not neither as it is meritorious or impetratory) we do commonly apply it to the souls in Purgatory, because the thing which these poor souls stand most in need of, is making satisfaction for their sins not fully satisfied for; which satisfaction we make in their behalf, as holy Job did in the behalf of his sons when he offered daily sacrifices for their sins. How this is not against charity towards ourselves shall be declared hereafter. In the meantime ponder the words of Scripture: "A merciful man doth good unto his own soul."[1]

[1] Prov. xi. 17.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

THAT BY OFFERING OUR ACTIONS FOR THE SOULS IN PURGATORY, WE DO NOT MERIT LESS, BUT MORE.

THAT we do not merit less, is evident out of the last chapter; that we merit more than otherwise we should have done, if we had not applied these our actions to the souls in Purgatory, is taught by the prince of divines in these words: "The affection of charity in him who suffereth for his friend, doth make his satisfaction more pleasing to God than if he had suffered for his own self."[1] And it is certain, out of Holy Scripture, that charity doth add an exceeding worth and value to our least actions; for only charity it is which maketh a cup of cold water, given for Christ's sake, to be rewarded in the life to come. And only charity it was which made the poor widow's mite of greater price than the richest gifts.

2. Now, then, all meriting hath for reward some higher degree of celestial glory, which degree would not have been purchased without that meritorious work had been done; so that if there be two men, who before were of equal merits, and the one of them should give a cup of cold water more for

[1] St. Thomas, *Contra Gentes*, l. iii. cap. 158.

Christ's sake than the other should give, this man for this so small a work should have a higher degree of glory than the other, and, consequently, he should see God for all eternity more perfectly and be for ever more happy than the other. So that, if we did truly love either God or ourselves, we should think all sufferings whatsoever, even those of Purgatory, to be a small price for the least degree of glory; for, indeed, the least is a good so great, that the suffering of never so long a Purgatory for purchasing it, would not be so much as suffering a flea-bite to purchase the empire of the whole world. It would make a man bless himself to see how stark mad men are in neglecting such a good.

3. To our purpose, then, I say, that by applying our actions to the souls in Purgatory, we do merit more than if we had not applied them to this end; and not only more, but very much more: and, therefore, though we did sustain many other and great inconveniences, yet they were all to be counted as nothing in comparison to these inestimable treasures of merit which by this devotion we purchase. St. Thomas saith excellent well: "Essential reward is infinitely better than the forgiveness of temporal pain;" so that though, by applying our satisfactions unto others, we should omit to gain for ourselves this forgiveness of temporal pain, yet we gain notably by the bargain if in place thereof we much increase our essential reward in everlasting glory. For this is an eternal good, a good infinitely better than the forgiveness of temporal pain, as the prince of divines taught

you. The causes which make this act of so high merit may be many; for, as we have showed in the fourth chapter, this devotion may be a work of most singular charity, most admirable gratitude, most rare contrition, most tender love towards our Lord and Saviour. But that which in a particular manner doth raise the worth of this action, is the most ardent charity and pious mercy towards our neighbour, which here is so resplendent that it doth contain and surpass all and every one of those works of mercy which our Saviour esteems so dearly, that unto them by name He shall give the eternal possession of Heaven when He shall come to judge. For He shall say unto those who stand at the right hand: "Come, ye blessed of My Father, possess you the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave Me to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me to drink; I was a stranger, and you took Me in; naked, and you covered Me; sick, and you visited Me; in prison, and you came to Me."[1] This act, I say, both containeth and surpasseth all those works put together. For who relieveth a soul in Purgatory, though he giveth not a piece of bread to the hungry, yet he giveth the Food of life and the Bread of Angels to one who was tormented worse than death with the hunger of it. He giveth not a cup of cold water to the thirsty, but he giveth the Fountain of living water, which runneth unto life everlasting, unto him whose thirst for it was so intolerable that no pain in the world can be com-

[1] St. Matt. xxv. 34—36.

pared to it. He doth not lodge a poor harbourless pilgrim in a barn for a night, but for the whole long day of eternity he lodgeth in the heavenly mansions a poor soul which wandered from this her home ever since her creation. He giveth not a few cast-off rags to clothe the naked, but he giveth the marriage-garment unto him who for want of it was cast for a time into outward darkness. He doth not give a comfortable visit to one that lieth sick of a burning fever, but him who burneth with Purgatory flames he carrieth to visit for ever God and His Angels. In fine, he doth not go to the imprisoned to afford them some small assistance, but he bringeth one out of the fiery dungeon of Purgatory into the liberty of the children of God.

4. Another cause there is which doth wonderfully exaggerate the worth of all these things, which followeth in the above-cited Scripture. For when the Blessed shall say, "Lord, when did we see Thee hungry, and fed Thee?"[1] our Lord shall answer them: "Amen, I say to you, as long as you did it unto one of these My least brethren, you did it to Me."[2] Oh, what a reward shall he have of so liberal a Majesty, who hath done so grateful a service as the very freeing of Christ Himself from Purgatory (if so He could be liable unto it) would be. See what Christ said unto St. Gertrude.[3]

5. The cause which may make the merit of this act to amount to an inconceivable greatness, is this, that those who are truly devoted to assist these

[1] St. Matt. xxv. 37. [2] St. Matt. xxv. 40.
[3] *Institut. Divin.* l. v. cap. xxv.

souls, receive daily such copious showers of Divine grace that, if they be not very backward in corresponding to them, they must needs go on daily increasing the treasures of their merits. For though many doubt whether the souls, whilst they remain in Purgatory, do pray for him by name who doth pray for them (because they, not seeing God, cannot know who they are who pray for them), yet there seems to be all reason that they should make in a general manner incessant prayer to Almighty God to bless all those who shall pray for them; for this opinion is both pious and probable, as Suarez saith.[1] And Denis the Carthusian recounteth how that in a Divine revelation, these words by a servant of God were heard to be uttered with the common voice of the souls in Purgatory: "O Lord God, grant, out of Thy incomprehensible power, a hundred-fold reward to all those in the world who with their prayers do help us and lift us up towards the light of Thy Deity."[2] Howsoever, no man can doubt but when they come to Heaven they will, both day and night, as efficaciously as they can, recommend unto Almighty God the necessities of all those who were so charitable unto them as to obtain their deliverance out of their horrible torments, and to purchase for them the light of God, Whom to see one moment sooner they know now what a good it is.

6. What grateful heart, then, can ever forget such a benefactor, especially when without any labour at all, yea, with greatest pleasure and

[1] *De Orat.* l. i. cap. ii. [2] *De Judic. Anim.* circa finem.

content, he can abundantly requite his charity. Ingratitude is a vice, and hath no place in Heaven. More grateful, therefore, questionless, will these souls be, most grateful will be all their friends, acquaintance, and kindred, their Angel Guardians and Patrons, yea, all the whole Court of Heaven, seeing that there is that perfect charity amongst the Blessed that every one of them is no less glad of his neighbour's good than he is of his own; and this action is incomparably more grateful unto them, in regard that the honour of the Divine Majesty is much increased, and our Blessed Saviour so singularly pleased by it, that it is as acceptable unto Him as if He Himself in Person had been the party delivered from the pains of Purgatory. The graces thus flowing down upon thee may be such that thou mayest come to owe thy salvation unto them; as when, by these intercessions, some damnable temptation is borne off from thee which might have quite overthrown thee; or when, by their prayers, grace is given thee to become victorious against such dangerous temptations, or, if thou hast consented unto them, grace is by their entreaty given unto thee, to excite thee to most hearty and pure contrition. Thus, by labouring to help others from Purgatory, thou mayest help thyself to avoid Hell; and, by concurring to bring the souls of others to Heaven, thou mayest procure heavenly glory to thy own self. Thus "a merciful man doth good to his own soul."[1] If thou hadst a due feeling of the unspeakable evils of Hell and inconceivable goods of

[1] Prov. xi. 17

Heaven, thou wouldst not a little esteem such a means as this is, so much helping to the avoiding of such an evil and obtaining of such a good. O my dear brother, deprive not these poor souls of their relief, thyself of these merits, the whole Court of Heaven of this joy, Christ of this comfort, God of this honour.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

THAT OUR ACTIONS, OFFERED UP FOR THE SOULS IN PURGATORY, ARE NOT LESS, BUT MORE IMPETRATORY OF OTHER FAVOURS.

FIRST I must entreat my reader to call to mind that which in the last chapter but one hath been said concerning the impetratory virtue of our actions, which, being applied to the souls in Purgatory according to their satisfactory virtue only, retain, notwithstanding, the self-same virtue to impetrate which they should have had though they had not been thus applied; for as I satisfy for my sins by that very prayer by which I beg my daily bread, and the obtaining of this petition is nothing hindered by this satisfaction, so the work which satisfieth for the sins of others doth not become less apt to move the goodness of God to the grant of any favour, for obtaining of which this work may also be offered. Wherefore they are in an error who think that they must cast all other devotions aside, and neither pray for themselves nor for their friends, nor for their own private or the public necessities, if they follow our advice in praying, fasting, giving alms, and offering up their

other good works for the souls in Purgatory—whereas all these things may be performed without the least hindrance to the obtaining of anything they can request; for these works only, as they are satisfactory, may be applied for the relief of these souls, and as they are impetratory, they may be offered up for the obtaining of what we please.

2. True it is, that sometimes the very thing which we do desire and petition in our prayers is the relief of the souls in Purgatory, and we do actually crave, entreat, and beg for this; and unto this our so earnest request, we do join other works of fasting, alms-deeds, &c., to move the mercy of God to hear graciously this our petition; and then we need not wonder if our prayers, as they are impetratory, do not impetrate for us other favours, for we never did demand them. So when I pray for the health of my father, this prayer of mine doth not impetrate the health of my mother; and even as, when I pray for both the health of my father and my mother, this prayer of mine is not so efficacious to obtain the health of my father as it would have been made for that end only, and no other. So when I pray for other things, and also for the souls in Purgatory, this prayer of mine is not perhaps so efficacious to obtain those other things as it would have been if it had been made for those only, and for nothing else. I did say, perhaps, for there be many reasons, as we shall see presently, for which prayer, thus made, becomes very efficacious for the obtaining those other requests which I desire to have granted, and which,

perhaps, may further the grant of them far more than praying for them alone would do.

3. But for the present, let us suppose that such a prayer is less effectual for obtaining of other things; yet this ought not to make men more backward to pray for the souls in Purgatory; for shall I never pray for my mother because by the same prayer I obtain somewhat less for my father than I should have done if I had prayed for him only? In the choice of these intentions for which we pray, we must regard many things, as the greater glory of God, the necessity of our neighbour, our own spiritual advancement, the common good of the Church, and the like. Now, perhaps, all things well considered, there will scarce be found any one thing which ought so dearly to be commended to our devotion as praying for the dead; in the which, among other things, there is also this to be noted, that as St. Thomas saith, "God doth rather accept of prayers for the dead than for the living, because they not being able, as the living are, to help themselves, do more stand in need of the help of others."[1] To the which we may add a worthy consideration of St. Denis, the famous disciple of St. Paul,[2] to wit, that when we pray for the living, our prayer many times, as it is impetratory, obtaineth nothing at all, because the thing we pray for is not convenient to be granted, or because (to use his example) the sins of those we pray for do hinder this effect, as the sins of Saul did hinder that the prayers could not be heard

[1] Suppl. iii. Sent. [2] *De Eccl. Hier.* cap. vii. p. 5.

in his behalf.[1] This in praying for the dead doth never take place; for those who are departed in God's grace, as St. Augustine teacheth, "deserved whilst they lived that these helps of prayers might profit them after their death."[2] Whence, as Bellarmine saith, "All divines do agree that such suffrages as are generally offered up for all the dead do profit all of them. But they disagree about those suffrages which are offered up for some dead in particular."[3] For Cardinal Cajetan[4] is of opinion that those who in this life took no care to relieve the souls of the dead, shall receive no benefit by such suffrages as their living friends offer up for them in particular. And the holy and learned Doctor, Denis the Carthusian, saith, "Those who have been slothful, and negligent, and hard-hearted in relieving the dead, must know that in the same measure that they have measured out to others, it shall be measured back unto them."[5] If this opinion were true, they ought not a little to be affrighted who pass over so lightly all that belongs to the assistance of the dead. But the milder and contrary opinion is maintained by Bellarmine, and more commonly by all divines. Wherefore prayer for the dead is never made without effect. Yet it is very good advice, when we offer up our prayers for any particular person, to offer them so that if such a person be not in need, or capable to be assisted by them, they may be accepted for the assistance of such others as may be relieved by

[1] 1 Kings xv. xvi. [2] *Enchir.* cap. c. [3] *De Purg.* cap. xviii.
[4] *Opusc.* t. i. tract. xvi. cap. xv. [5] *De Judic. Animarum*, art. ult.

them. The observing of this will make our charity still to have its full effect.

4. Let us come now to the reasons for which (as I began to insinuate) our prayers are far more impetratory when we remember the dead in them than when we omit this charitable remembrance. The first reason is, because this praying for the dead is an act of mercy so excellent that it doth in a supereminent manner contain and surpass all the corporal deeds of mercy put together, as hath been demonstrated. Now there is no more efficacious means to stir up the mercy and liberality of God towards us, than the exercise of works of mercy and liberality. For as our Saviour saith, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."[1] And again, "In what measure you shall mete, it shall be measured to you again, and more shall be given to you."[2] Will you know how much more? St. Luke telleth you: "Good measure and pressed down and shaken together and running over shall they give unto your bosom."[3] With what words could the largeness of this measure have been more fully set forth? And, indeed, of so good a God we could expect no other; far be it from Him that our liberality should rather shut than open His hands. His deeds will ever prove His saying true, "Give, and it shall be given unto you," in the measure declared unto you in this very place.

5. And we may be the more confident of this particular act, because our Saviour taketh it as

[1] St. Matt. v. 7. [2] St. Mark iv. 24. [3] St. Luke vi. 38.

done unto Himself; and therefore doubtless as those souls which we have delivered cannot but be most ready to further any just petition which we shall make, so our dear Lord, Who counteth Himself to be the person released, will never be wanting in the furtherance of whatsoever we shall piously desire. Now, to have His good word so sure on our side must needs be of greater consequence for obtaining any reasonable favour than anything we can devise. And as far as my capacity can reach, I cannot conceive in what manner we may more efficaciously compass the grant of all our most important requests than by thus obliging (as I may say) Christ our Lord to speak in our behalf with that earnestness which we may imagine those souls to use whom we have relieved.

6. A further reason why our prayers, when we remember the souls of Purgatory in them, do become of far greater efficacy to obtain our requests, is this: because (as hath been insinuated) this prayer, though of itself it hath not this greater efficacy, yet what it wanteth of itself, it procureth to be far more effectually performed by the help of those voices which it winneth, among which the first place is to be given to the Word Incarnate, Whose words cannot but be heard: "I knew that Thou hearest Me always," saith this our Lord.[1] The voices also of Heaven's whole Court cannot but join with the Word, both because their affections are united with an inseparable true-lover's-knot, and because there is not one in Heaven who

[1] St. John xi. 42.

thinketh not himself to have particular interest in the furtherance of this cause; for all that blessed mansion love the soul released even as they love their souls. For as St. Austin saith, "There nobody loveth another less than himself. Whence every one doth not otherwise rejoice at each one's good than at his own."[1] And consequently all and every one of them will be in a manner as forward to assist us as those souls will be who were released by our prayers. And who can express how ready these souls will be who were released by our prayers? And who can express how ready these souls released or relieved by us, are to help us in all occurrences? Tell me now, what means can you invent more efficacious to make, in a manner, sure whatsoever you request.

7. Behold here a most admirable manner of communication, which we living in the Church Militant may keep with our brethren, both belonging to the Church Patient in Purgatory and Triumphant in Heaven; so obliging, and so gratifying them, and each one of them, that we come to have as many, and as powerful intercessors to promote all our just requests, as Heaven hath citizens. Art not thou then, dear Christian, of my mind, that in order to obtain any favour for ourselves, or for any other, there is scarce any means so effectual as to be still assistant to these suffering souls, by procuring sacrifices, by offering prayers, fasts, and alms-deeds for them? The Rev. Father Alexis de Salo thus writeth of himself:

[1] *Manuale*, xxxv.

"One of my particular devotions is, whensoever I desire to obtain any particular favour for myself, or any other, to say some few prayers for the dead. And I assure you, I have experienced in myself and others strange effects."[1] For my part, I have seen, and by most credible relations heard, so many apparent examples to confirm this practice, that no sophistry of never so subtle disputants shall dispute me out of it. This experience quite blunts their sharpest weapons. Though if we were to come to disputing, I hold myself to have said enough both here and in the first part.[2] I cannot, therefore, but recommend the devotion which many use, who being to undertake long and troublesome journeys, do willingly undergo this difficulty, to the end that they may make, as it were, as many pilgrimages as day's journeys for the relief of those souls in whose behalf they daily offer up the labour and toil of each day's travel, which by this devotion becomes more sweet and prosperous. But that the least occasion of the least error may not be given by what I write, I have thought fit to speak here a short word of two questions, very commonly demanded.

8. The first question is, Whether we are to implore the aid, help, or intercession of such souls as are still in Purgatory? And I make choice to answer by recounting unto you what hath been delivered by two of the greatest personages of this latter age. The first is Cardinal Bellarmine. "It is not incredible but that the souls in Purgatory do

[1] Alexis de Salo, pt. i. 62. [2] Chap. xxiv. nn. 6—10.

pray and impetrate for us: for Dives in Hell[1] prayed for his brothers when he was in greater torment than those in Purgatory."[2] Yet, I pray, note well what follows: "But though these things be true, yet commonly it seems superfluous to beg of them to pray for us. Because they have no ordinary means to know what we do in particular. But they have only in general this knowledge, that we are in many necessities. Neither is it likely that ordinarily they have revelations concerning what we do, or what we ask of them." Thus far Bellarmine. Let us now hear the other great Doctor, which is Suarez, writing thus of the souls in Purgatory. "If they know not our prayers, it seems an idle and superfluous thing to pray to them. Yet I add that it is not certain that they do not know our prayers. And it is not incredible but that they are made known to them by their Guardian Angels, or else by our Angels. For this is not a thing above their state. And this is an act suitable to the office of the Angel Keepers. Wherefore if any one should find fruit and devotion in this manner of prayer, he seems not to be dissuaded from it." But, good reader, pass not over these his following words without taking special notice of them. "Although," saith he, "this manner of prayer seems not necessary, because devotion towards the souls in Purgatory is more manifested by aiding and assisting them by satisfactory works done in their behalf, and by praying for them. And this suffices to move them to pray for us, when and after what

[1] St. Luke xvi. 27, 28. [2] *De Purgatorio*, l. ii. cap. xvii.

manner they shall be able according to the Divine ordination."[1] This seems the very best decision of this question. If the heir-apparent to a great kingdom were held captive by his enemies, and left in cruel torments by them, from which, either by some convenient advice or device I were able to relieve him, think you not that I should far sooner deserve his favour and assistance in all things by affording him my seasonable help rather than in employing my hands to present an unseasonable petition unto him to be assistant unto me. These who are now in Purgatory be heirs-apparent to the Kingdom of Heaven, though their offences (which be their greatest enemies) have left them for a time abandoned to insufferable torments. If we desire, indeed, to obtain and deserve their best aid and help, let us rather be now aiding and helping unto them, by most seasonable prayers for them, than become unseasonable petitioners unto them. Moreover, by thus affording them relief, rather than by begging relief of them, I shall win the favour of their Angel Keepers, their patrons and friends in Heaven, and Christ Himself, with all those blessed spirits, as the pre-alleged reasons do convince.

The second question is, Whether souls in Purgatory pray for the living? Bellarmine, above cited, supposes that they pray for us in a general manner; which opinion is accounted both "pious and probable" by Suarez, above cited. And he declares it very well to our purpose. "They may pray," saith he, "for all such as pray for them, or who do

[1] *De Orat.* l. i. cap. x.

anything advancing their deliverance. For that prayer is for such persons as God knows in particular, though those souls do not. They may therefore beg of God that He would be pleased to succour them, to forgive their sins (by stirring them to contrition), to take temptation away from them, and do them such-like favours as these are."[1] And whosoever shall well ponder it, he will find these favours to be such as may extraordinarily conduce towards our eternal salvation, as we said in the end of the sixth chapter. Yea, by this means we may come also to obtain all those our pious requests to further which we did betake ourselves to offer up some peculiar devotions for the souls in Purgatory. For whilst these souls, all of them, are so frequently, and as it were incessantly, begging that God would graciously grant all that piously shall be demanded of Him, whether it be for themselves or for others, by all such as shall be their special benefactors, the Divine mercy, by so fervent, by so just, by so incessant prayers, of so many and so good friends of His, is sweetly drawn to condescend to their request. "For why should not this be their request," saith Suarez, "seeing that this is an act of charity and gratitude?" Whence with the same Doctor I conclude, "that we have from hence sufficient ground to be always well-doing to these souls, to the end that we may the more be made partakers of their prayers."

[1] Cap. xi.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

THAT BY OFFERING OUR ACTIONS FOR THE SOULS IN PURGATORY, WE DO NOT LESS, BUT MORE SATISFY FOR OUR OWN SINS.

Now we come to that point which only hath difficulty in this matter; for it may seem clear, that when we give away to others the fruits of our own satisfaction, we cannot enjoy these fruits ourselves, no more than we can pay our debts with the same money which we pay for the debts of our friends. This difficulty is very solidly answered by saying that which is most true, to wit, that to pray for and assist the souls in Purgatory, is an act so highly meritorious of grace and glory, an act so impetratory of such things as may be eternally beneficial to our own souls, that the loss of the fruit of our satisfactions is nothing to be valued in regard of the gain which we purchase, as may appear by what hath been said before.[1] A second and sufficient answer might be, that this loss may fully be repaired by the gaining of Indulgences for ourselves. So, though I cannot pay my own debts with the same money which I pay out for the debts of my friends, yet I may, by favour, procure a

[1] Chap. vi. nn. 2, 3.

releasement of my own debts, and so be as free from them as if I had paid them with that money which I liberally laid out to discharge my friend's debt. That such favours or Indulgences may be obtained, we will prove at large in the twelfth chapter.

2. But these two answers being for the present let pass, I intend to make good the title of this chapter, and to show that this devotion is a rare kind of satisfaction. For understanding of which it is much to be noted, that when we do any good work for the souls in Purgatory—for example, when we fast, or pray, or give alms for them—we have such a kind of act as this is: I do offer this fast, this prayer, this alms, for such a soul, or such souls in Purgatory. The thing, therefore, which we give away is only such a fast, prayer, or alms, and of the fruit of this work, as it is satisfactory, we wholly deprive ourselves, and consequently, as it is satisfactory, it maketh no satisfaction for our sins, but only for their sins for whom we did offer it; yet that act, by which I, offering this fast for another, deprive myself of the fruit thereof, redoundeth wholly to my profit; neither doth any part of it benefit any one but myself. Now I affirm that with this act, by which, with so great charity to God and my neighbour, I give away this fast, this alms, and prayer, I do both satisfy for my sins, and satisfy in no mean manner, but in a manner far more excellent than is ordinarily conceived.

3. For, first, this is an act most meritorious, and consequently most satisfactory. For, as the learned

Vasquez teacheth,[1] every good work, for the self-same cause for which it doth deserve to be rewarded in Heaven, deserveth also freedom from such impediments as may hinder the enjoying of this reward; such an impediment as the being in Purgatory would be. Moreover, the more that we by our good deeds do endear ourselves to the Divine Majesty, the more we do recompense any former displeasure done unto Him. Grateful services cannot but abolish old offences. Hence also divines of prime note do aver that all good acts are in the self-same degree satisfactory in which they are meritorious. So saith Victoria, Soto, Ledesma, &c. Now we have demonstrated that this act is in a very high degree meritorious, and therefore, by consequence, it must be in a very high degree satisfactory.

4. But let us consider a little more this act by itself. First, it cannot but be hard and laborious to corrupted nature to be willing to fast for another: and if this be not very difficult, why do you hold back so much, seeing it may be so beneficial unto you? If you find no difficulty, because your charity towards your neighbour is such that with joy you can do all these things for his sake, this pious disposition of yours doth not lessen, but increase the satisfactory virtue of this act. For as, excellently, St. Thomas: "The lessening of the pain, which proceeds from the readiness of the will caused by charity, doth not diminish, but increase the efficacy of our satisfaction."[2]

[1] Pt. ii. q. 94. d. 5. n. 3.
[2] Suppl. q. 15. a. 1.

5. Again, this is an act of rare charity towards God, Whose glory we advance by thus procuring the increase of His honour, done to Him in Heaven by the souls we release; and towards our neighbour, to whom we procure the greatest good that may be. Now, as Coninck saith: "Not a few, but all divines do teach, that by an act of charity produced with never so much ease and delight, a man may satisfy for all the pains he hath deserved."[1] The Scripture telleth us as much: "Many sins are forgiven her, because she hath loved much."[2] "Above all things having continually mutual charity among yourselves, for charity covereth a multitude of sins."[3] And if this be not enough, "Charity covereth all sins."[4]

6. Lastly, this act is one of the chiefest deeds of mercy, surpassing all the works of corporal mercy put together; and therefore, questionless, it is an act most highly satisfactory: for if of all corporal alms it be written that they free from sin and death, and do not suffer the soul to go into darkness;[5] that they resist sin, as water doth the burning fire;[6] that if you "give alms, behold all things are clean unto you;[7] what shall we think of this spiritual alms, by which Heaven is given, and Purgatory pains forgiven to a poor soul, made of a most pitiful prisoner a most glorious Saint? What a work of mercy is this? Of the works of mercy in general, St. Thomas saith: "The works of spiritual mercy

[1] *De Sacram.* dis. x.; *De Satisf.* d. 4.
[2] St. Luke vii. 47. [3] 1 St. Peter iv. 8. [4] Prov. x. 12.
[5] Tobias iv. 11. [6] Ecclus. iii. 33. [7] St. Luke xi. 41.

are so much more excellent than the works of corporal mercy, by how much the soul is more noble than the body."[1] By this it appeareth, that all those who exercise these works of charity and spiritual mercy frequently (as all do, who do much for the souls in Purgatory) are so far from depriving themselves of all satisfaction, that as often as they give their satisfactory works away, they heap up great treasures of satisfaction: so that here that which the Scripture saith in the Proverbs is perfectly verified: "Some distribute their own goods, and grow richer."[2]

[1] *Summa*, ii. 2. q. 3. a. 2. [2] Prov. xi. 24.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

THAT BY OFFERING OUR ACTIONS FOR THE SOULS IN PURGATORY, WE HAVE A GREAT HOPE OF ESCAPING EITHER ALL OR A GOOD PART OF PURGATORY.

THE proof of this title may be in part drawn out of the preceding chapters; for, this act being so eminent, if we regard merit, and so effectual, if we regard impetration, may with good ground be thought partly to deserve, as it is meritorious, partly to obtain by the way of favour, as it is impetratory, that our merciful Lord should deal more mildly than the ordinary course of justice exacts with all those who have both made a most noble kind of satisfaction for their own sins, and have, with a most heroical charity, done many worthy actions to satisfy for the sins of others: neither are there wanting many convenient reasons to persuade us to have this honourable conceit of the Divine Goodness.

2. The Holy Scripture itself gives us good ground to build this opinion: "Charity covereth a multitude of sins." And yet more clearly: "Charity covereth all sins." And what charity more eminent than this? "Alms deliver from all sin, and from death, and will not suffer the soul to

go into darkness."[1] "Give alms, and behold all things are clean unto you." Now if these prerogatives are to be granted to alms-deeds when they are plentiful (which I add because St. Chrysostom saith, "Not to give, but to give plentifully, is an alms-deed"[2]); if, I say, alms-deeds be thus privileged, being a mere work of corporal mercy, what shall we think of this alms, so incomparably surpassing all corporal works of mercy? For it relieveth a greater misery than any corporal necessity can be, and it bestoweth a gift no less than the possession of God Himself. Shall such an alms permit the giver of it to go into darkness? No; this alms also will make all clear: for "he that giveth to the poor, shall not want."[3] He shall not sustain this necessity, the most grievous a poor soul can be in, because, as holy David saith, "Blessed is he that understandeth concerning the needy and the poor: the Lord will deliver him in the evil day."[4] He shall be delivered in that day, which to others is so evil.

3. And, indeed, how can we think otherwise? For be not these our Saviour's words: "Amen, I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these My least brethren, you did it to Me."[5] Now, if our Saviour taketh the delivery of the souls of His brethren as gratefully as if His own Soul had been freed from Purgatory, what shadow of likelihood is

[1] Tobias iv. 11.
[2] "Non dare, sed copiose dare, eleemosyna est."
[3] Prov. xxviii. 27. [4] Psalm xl. 1.
[5] St. Matt. xxv. 40.

there that He will not procure the delivery of him whom He acknowledgeth to have been as His own deliverer? Who of us can have the heart—and our hearts are hard enough—yet who of us can have the heart to let him lie roasting in Purgatory flames who hath freed us from this misery, especially if we could effect his releasement as easily as our Saviour can work ours, even without breach of the very rigour of justice: to wit, by offering in our behalf His superabundant satisfactions for the supply of such satisfaction as we stand in need of; that is, to bestow for His own sake a Plenary Indulgence upon us; which, though it be a favour extraordinary, yet the motive to grant it beareth proportion with such a grant; and to him who hath showed so extraordinary charity, liberality, and mercy, it ought not to seem strange if extraordinary charity, liberality, and mercy be shown by Him, Whose bowels are made all of charity, bounty, and compassion: for if in punishing, God observeth this rule, "By what things a man sinneth, by the same also he is tormented;"[1] "As he hath done, so shall it be done to him; breach for breach, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, shall he restore,"[2] may we not justly think that, in matters of favour, He doth show greatest mercy to him who hath showed greatest mercy to others? What other sense have those words, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy"?[3] Wherefore, "As he hath done, so shall it be done to him." As he

[1] Wisdom xi. 17. [2] Levit. xxiv. 19, 20.
[3] St. Matt. v. 7.

hath offered his satisfactions for the releasement of Christ's brethren, so Christ will offer up His superabundant satisfaction for the releasement of his soul. Soul for soul shall be repaid to him; ransom for ransom. As he hath freed others, so he shall be freed himself. Very rational are the words of Abimelech to Abraham: "According to the kindness that I have done to thee, thou shall do to me."[1]

4. We must here overslip, in a cursory manner, that evident text of Scripture, which doth almost demonstrate that which we have said, "Give, and it shall be given unto you;" but mark well in what measure: "Good measure and pressed down and shaken together and running over shall they give into your bosom."[2] The thing which we did give was the fruits of our satisfactions, for supply of our brethren's want, by which gift he was released. Wherefore, that our Lord may return us equal measure, as great wants of ours must be supplied by the fruits of His superabundant satisfactions; but that this measure be a "good measure and pressed down and shaken together and running over," we may expect to be, in that over-liberal measure, made partakers of Christ's satisfactions, that by them, our debts being to the last farthing wholly discharged, or an act of perfect contrition or charity, being by His gracious gifts bestowed upon us, we may pass without impediment to the reward of our charity.

5. To all these so well-grounded reasons, we will add, for a conclusion, the certain assistance which

[1] Genesis xxi. 23. [2] St. Luke vi. 38.

infallibly in this our necessity will be afforded us by all those whom we have either released or relieved: and not only all these happy souls, but also all and every one of their blessed kindred, Guardian Angels, Patrons, &c., will favour us in our death, to requite the favour by which we oblige them in our life; so that many of the Saints, by their intercessions, and some by offering up their superabundant satisfactions, will so prevail with the mercy of God, that we need not much fear, all helps being put together, to be long left forlorn in the flames of Purgatory.

6. And lest, perhaps, this fear might have some little place left in any man's heart, it hath pleased the Divine Goodness, by word of mouth, to confirm all we have said. St. Gertrude was one of the most renowned Saints for virtue, and one of the most wonderful Saints for the miraculous favours which daily were done unto her that the Church hath had. This blessed Saint (as Denis the Carthusian relateth) did with an admirable affection, give all and every of her actions wholly unto the souls in Purgatory, not reserving for herself the least fruit of her satisfactions. Coming therefore to die, she began not a little to be afflicted, for fear lest, that having many sins to satisfy for, and having left herself destitute of all her satisfactory works, she might be liable to grievous punishments. But Christ Himself did vouchsafe to comfort her with these words: "That thou mayest understand how grateful that charity of thine hath been unto Me, which thou didst show towards the souls, I do even now forgive thee all those pains which thou shouldst have suffered.

And I, Who for one have promised a hundred-fold, will now show My liberality, and I will heap up glory upon thee."

7. This comfort may they expect, who have showed the like mercy towards the souls of their brethren; but those who have slighted this devotion as superstitious, or fit only for old wives, may justly fear to have those dreadful words spoken unto them: "Judgment without mercy to him that hath not done mercy."[1]

[1] St. James ii. 13.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

THAT IT IS NOT AGAINST CHARITY TO OURSELVES TO OFFER OUR ACTIONS FOR THE SOULS IN PURGATORY, BUT IT IS RATHER AGAINST IT NOT TO OFFER THEM.

THE common and the only objection which any Catholic can make against this liberality towards the souls in Purgatory is this: That though our prayers, or other good works, offered up to God for the souls in Purgatory, be equally, or rather more, both meritorious and impetratory than otherwise they would have been, yet it cannot be denied but that they do not satisfy for our own sins; which, seeing that they be many and great, the pains due unto them will be excessive; and, therefore, if our charity were well ordered, we would not so forget ourselves as to leave ourselves in this manner deprived of those satisfactions, for want of which we shall be liable to these torments, which be so very terrible. This objection I have deferred to this place, because now the answers unto it, out of that which hath been said, will be most clear.

2. I answer then, first, that though we did become liable to these and greater pains, yet they were not so much to be esteemed as a flea-bite for

gaining of a kingdom, if by this our charity towards the souls we might increase (as we do most highly increase) the crown of our eternal glory.[1] I answer secondly, that by the gaining of Indulgences we may prevent this pretended incommodity, as we shall prove at large in the eleventh chapter.

3. Thirdly, I give this direct and clear answer, that though by the works we do for the souls we do satisfy only for their, and not at all for our own sins, yet by that rare act of charity, by which we give these works away unto them, we do satisfy in a most high degree, as hath been proved in the eighth chapter; yea, in a degree so high, that by this satisfaction (and other helps, as we did demonstrate in the last chapter) we have great hope in escaping either all, or greatest part, of Purgatory: yea, by this devotion we may escape Hell itself, as we have before declared.[2]

4. To conclude this chapter. In a word, it is nothing against well-ordered charity towards ourselves to help these souls as much as we can; but it needs must be against perfection of this charity not to assist them to our full power, for that we lose the merit of so rare a charity, and the loss of this merit is a loss of the more perfect sight of God for ever. What a loss is this, dear brother—what a loss is this! Remember what we said out of St. Thomas,[3] "That our essential bliss" (which consists in the fruition of God, of which we are made more abundantly partaker by having exercised

[1] See chap. vi. n. 2. [2] Chap. vi. n. 6.
[3] Chap. vi. n. 3.

more abundant charity to our neighbour) "is infinitely better than the forgiveness of temporal pain;" which, notwithstanding, is the chiefest good which those niggards aim at who pretend so much charity to themselves. They understand not that true charity to themselves consists in the real desiring, and effectual procuring, their own good. Those do not do this, who, fixing their eyes only upon that temporal good which consists in purchasing forgiveness of the temporal pain due to their sins, omit to procure that which "is infinitely better than this forgiveness"—that is, they omit to purchase a more eminent degree in fruition of essential beatitude, by being made partakers of which they might have known, honoured, loved, and enjoyed God for a whole eternity, in a far more perfect manner than now they shall. A good, so far surpassing the forgiveness of all temporal pain in Purgatory, that there is not one of the saints in Heaven who would not willingly undergo the temporal pains of a thousand Purgatories, if, by the undergoing of them, he might notably increase his essential glory in beatifical vision and fruition; as we may do, exercising those most meritorious acts of charity in relieving the souls in Purgatory, which, how much they conduce to our advancement in essential beatitude, hath been largely declared in the sixth and seventh chapters.

5. I have yet one short question of these provident self-seekers of their own commodity, Whether they do conceive, that by reserving all the benefits of their satisfactory works to themselves only, without

bestowing any part upon the souls of their distressed brethren, their satisfactions will so abound, as to suffice for the full payment of all their debts to God, even to the last farthing? Surely you little understand the greatness and multitude of your offences, and hugely overvalue your own works, if you think you have no reason to fear a very fearful account in Purgatory. But, as I proved in the former chapter, those whose charity hath been eminent in relieving the souls of their departed brethren, may have justly great hopes of avoiding all, or a very great part, of their Purgatory pains: so that the forgiveness of temporal pains in Purgatory, which you esteem so great a good, may sooner be purchased by this devotion, together with a far more eminent degree in essential beatitude, which is a good so infinitely surpassing the former. Wherefore, if we be indeed true lovers and seekers of our own commodity, here is enough spoken unto us.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

BY WHAT MEANS WE MAY HELP THE SOULS IN PURGATORY.

If God hath done us the favour to soften our hearts, we shall not now desire any new motives, but rather seek by what means we may chiefly relieve these poor souls. For those who are thus disposed, we will declare what is to be done in this matter.

2. That which in the first place ought to be recommended is, that if they will indeed benefit either their own souls, or satisfy for the souls of their neighbours, they must put themselves in a state of grace; for a dead member can neither help the body of which it is a member, nor anybody else. And St. Paul saith, "If I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing."[1] This supposed,

3. The ordinary means of relieving the dead are these: prayer, fasting, and alms-deeds. As for prayer for the dead, it is instituted by the Apostles themselves, as we proved in the first part, and so esteemed by the holy Church, that at the end of

[1] 1 Cor. xiii. 3.

every hour of Divine Office, she teacheth us to pray that the souls of the faithful may rest in peace; for she would not have us pray at any hour without remembering these afflicted souls in our prayers. It would make one wonder to see with what affection St. Austin, in the last two chapters of his ninth book of his *Confessions*, doth pray for the soul of his mother; and not content with his own prayers, he doth earnestly crave and beg the prayers of all, in these fiery words: "Inspire, O Lord, inspire into Thy servants, that as many as shall read these things, may be mindful at Thy altar of Monica, Thy servant, that that which she did last of all request of me may be the more plentifully performed by the prayers of many."

4. But among all kinds of prayers there is none comparable to the Oblation of the dreadful Sacrifice of the Mass; for in this Sacrifice, the self-same Christ is offered, in an unbloody manner, upon the altar, Who was offered in a bloody manner upon the Cross. So saith St. Ambrose: "We offer always one and the same Sacrifice, and not one Lamb to-morrow and another to-day, but always the same, one Christ is everywhere, here fully and there fully."[1] And again, "When we sacrifice, Christ is present, Christ is sacrificed."[2] For, as St. Austin saith, "The flesh of our Sacrifice is made the body of our Priest."[3] Wherefore that most ancient and glorious Martyr, St. Hippolytus, in his Oration, *De Consummatione Mundi*, bringeth in our

[1] *In Hebr.* x. [2] *In Luc.* l. i. cap. 1.
[3] *De Trin.* l. iv. cap. xiv.

Saviour thus speaking to our priests: "Come, you, who daily sacrifice My Body and My Blood." And Christ saith this to all priests; for as, excellently, St. Chrysostom: "The sacred Oblation, what priest soever offers it, is still the same: for men do not sacrifice this victim, but Christ Himself."[1] Wherefore the Victim which in this Sacrifice is offered, being true Christ, and the self-same Christ being Chief Priest, which by His ministers and substitutes doth sanctify and offer this Victim, can any one wonder if all we Catholics, together with St. Cyril of Jerusalem, "do believe that the obsecration of that holy and dreadful Sacrifice which is placed on the altar, is the greatest help for the souls for which it is offered."[2] See this place at large; for nothing can be spoken more Catholicly.

5. The sacrifices of the Old Law were esteemed by the chief and only true believers of those times to have such virtue to relieve the dead, that when soldiers were slain in battle, they made a gathering of no less than "twelve thousand drachms of silver, and sent it to Jerusalem for sacrifice to be offered for the sins of the dead."[3] What esteem, then, ought we to have of our Sacrifice? St. Austin deservedly praised his dead mother in these words: "She did not think how to have her body sumptuously buried, or embalmed, but she desired that her memory might be made at God's altar, at which she never omitted any one day of her life to be present, knowing that from thence is

[1] Hom. ii. *in* 2 *Tim.*
[2] *Catech. Mystag.* v. [3] 2 Mach. xii. 43.

dispensed the Holy Host, or Sacrifice, whereby is blotted out the guilt of the world."[1] And this which she requested was fulfilled "when the Sacrifice of our price was offered for her,"[2] as St. Austin saith it was.

6. This piety, which so flourished in the primitive Church, ceaseth not in the prime parts of the world to flourish in these our days. No less than one thousand seven hundred Masses, upon one and the self-same day, were in Madrid celebrated at the funeral of Margaret, wife to Philip III. of Spain: and besides a thousand Masses, which this Queen by her will gave order to have said for her soul, the King, of his liberality, caused twenty thousand more to be said for her.[3] It is not very many years since the death of the Archduke Albertus, Prince of the Low Countries, whose pious wife, Isabel, did procure for the relief of his soul forty thousand Masses, and for thirty days together she herself did hear ten Masses daily for her pious lord and husband.[4]

7. As for fasting, most remarkable is that which we read in the Scripture, that after the death of Saul and his sons, the men of Jabes Galaad did take his dead body and the dead bodies of his sons, and buried them in the woods of Jabes, and fasted seven days.[5] Under the name of fasts, all other mortifications and austerities are comprehended, as disciplines, hair-cloth, lying on the ground, &c.

[1] *Confess.* l. ix. cap. iii. [2] *Ibid.* cap. xii.
[3] Gusman, *Vita Margar. Austriac.*, cap. iii. p. 3.
[4] P. F. Jac. Curvoisier, *Mausolæo.* [5] 1 Kings xxxi. 11—13.

But because some men's silken ears cannot endure so hard language as the naming of these things, and others, under pretence of health, will plead inability to perform such works, I will add some few acts of mortification which no man or woman can be too weak to exercise. For example, to debar themselves of some less necessary recreations, to abstain from some sweet morsels, for some small space to keep silence, not to see, not to hear such and such curiosities. But one act of virtue there is which the weakest creature in the world may practise; and it is an act of so high worth, that the strongest man in the world can scarce practise a better. It is this: for Christ's sake to forgive all those, from your very heart, who have done any injury or injuries unto you. This is not my doctrine, but the doctrine of St. Austin: "Those who desire to be delivered from this temporal purging fire, let them, by continual prayers and frequent fastings, and large alms, and especially by forgiving those who have offended against them, redeem their ordinary daily sins."[1] This act, which St. Austin doth so especially, above all others, commend, hath a better recommendation in the Word of God, which doth in plain terms promise to this act a Plenary Indulgence, a Jubilee, a full remission of all sins in this large form of grant, "Forgive, and you shall be forgiven."[2] And again, "For if you will forgive men their offences, your Heavenly Father will forgive you also your offences."[3] This pardon

[1] Serm. xli. *De Sanctis.*
[2] St. Luke vi. 37. [3] St. Matt. vi. 14.

you may gain for the souls in Purgatory. Hear, then, a memorable example to this purpose.

8. The only son of an honourable widow was murdered by a wicked fellow who, being for this his murder in danger of being apprehended by the officers, had hid himself; but the officers and the widow had intelligence where he lay. The officers went to the place to take him, but the pious widow did, for God's sake, so truly pardon this greatest mischief which could have been done her, that she did not only certify the murderer of his danger, to the end that he might fly away in time, but for this end did she furnish him also with money, and gave him the horse of her dead son, that he might escape the better. After this, she retired herself to pray for her son's soul; when behold, her son all in glory appeared unto her, and told her that for so great a charity towards his murderer, God had already freed him from the fire of Purgatory, which for many years he should have suffered.[1] Thus much for this point. We may also much relieve the souls in Purgatory, by suffering for them such crosses as it shall please God to lay upon us; as sickness, loss of goods, of friends, trouble of the mind, and all kind of afflictions; which are exceeding satisfactory, if we accept them willingly, or bear them patiently.

9. A third kind of satisfaction most available to the souls in Purgatory is to exercise alms-deeds, which are most effectual to abolish all pain due to sin, and therefore most profitable to those poor

[1] Osorius, Fer. vi. post Cineres.

souls, both when they are given to any sort of poor men, and most of all, when they are given unto those who are voluntarily poor, as all Religious, both men and women, are; for they will be sure to pray devoutly for the dead. So that they receive a double benefit, both by the gift of the alms itself, which is a work highly satisfactory, and also by the prayers of those to whom the alms are given, who often are very great servants of Almighty God, and their prayers most powerful with Him. It was the voice of an Angel sent from Heaven which said: "Alms delivereth from death, and the same is that which purgeth away sins, and maketh to find mercy and life everlasting."[1] "Water quencheth a flaming fire, and alms resisteth sins."[2] Quench, oh, quench these so painful flames with so sovereign water. Hence is that excellent advice of St. Ambrose,[3] who exhorts the parents to bestow the portions which they intended to have given their children, who now are dead, in alms-deeds for the relief of their souls. The same devotion was also taught in the Greek Church by the golden mouth of St. Chrysostom:[4] "If many barbarous people used to burn together the bodies of their dead friends, and all which belonged to them, far more rationally mayest thou make over to thy dead son those goods of thine" which thou hast designed for him. "Do you think that your son departed this life stained with any spot of sin?" Yes, surely thou hast reason to think so. But what then? Then, saith St. Chrysostom:

[1] Tobias xii. 9. [2] Ecclus. iii. 33. [3] *De Fide Resurr.* l. i.
[4] Homil. xxxii. t. ii. *in Matt.*

"Give him what should be his own, that thereby he may wipe off those stains." So he. And in another place he, upon another occasion, suggests a laudable exercise of charity, which our devotion may thus apply to the relief of the suffering souls of our brethren. Place at your bed's head, or closet, a little box, and when you prepare to go to rest, and have now made your usual examen of your conscience, with hearty contrition and sorrow for your sins, enjoin yourself this small penance, to cast into that box the smallest farthing, token, or mite which thou hast, and account it a kind of sacrilege to bestow any parcel of this soul-money in any other use than alms to the poor, exercising this act of piety for the assistance of the poor souls in Purgatory. I will assure thee, thy own soul will have no small share in this alms. Thus you may "make unto you friends of the mammon of iniquity, that when you shall fail, they may receive you into everlasting dwellings."[1] Excellent also is that counsel which some give to rich men. They advise them, as often as they hear a poor man knocking at their door, to imagine themselves to hear the voice of a poor soul in Purgatory begging for relief; and if they have any mercy in them, this imagination will stir them up to bestow some small alms, both for the spiritual relief of the souls in Purgatory, and the corporal relief of their poor neighbour.

10. How grateful to God, and beneficial to the givers, those alms are which are bestowed upon others for their relief, will appear by a strange

[1] St. Luke xvi. 9.

example, which I will relate to thee, only as a most profitably instructive parable, though I read it related as a true story in an author which I shall cite. The relation is one of Eusebius, Duke of Sardinia. This good Duke was so devoted to the souls in Purgatory that he bestowed all the tithes of his dukedom in Masses, alms-deeds, and other pious works for their delivery; and, moreover, gave one of his best cities (which was therefore called the City of God), with all the revenues thereof, to be employed for the same end. It happened that Ostorgius, Duke of Sicily, being at war with this Eusebius, surprised this city. The news whereof being brought to Eusebius, he was so sensible of the loss, that he protested he had rather have lost half his dukedom; and so, with all speed drawing his men together (which were but a handful in regard of the enemy), marched boldly on to recover the same. In the way, his scouts discovered a great army approaching with armour, horses, banners, all as white as snow, at which report the Duke was somewhat stricken; yet, reflecting on the matter, conceived hope of good from that joyful colour. Wherefore, sending out four choice men to learn who they were and what they intended, they were answered by four more of the white army coming to meet them, that they need not to fear, for they were soldiers to the King of Heaven, friends to Eusebius, and enemies to his enemy. The Duke was much comforted with this answer, and thereupon riding in person towards the army, was presently met and kindly saluted by some of

them, who confirmed what had been said before, bidding him fear nothing, but march on with his army after theirs. So he did. Then the white army, which seemed to be forty thousand strong, making a stand near the camp of Ostorgius, came presently to a parley, and gave him to understand that they were the soldiers of the King of Heaven, sent to revenge the unjust surprisal of that city belonging to their Master, and to put Eusebius again in possession; adding withal such threats that Ostorgius was extremely terrified, and humbly demanded peace, promising all possible satisfaction. By this time Eusebius was come up, to whom Ostorgius readily offered to restore the double of what he had taken, and to make himself and his people tributary unto him. These conditions being agreed upon, Eusebius applied himself to the white army with such signs of gratitude as were fitting on that occasion, and then beginning to inquire more particularly what they were, had for answer that they were all souls delivered by his pious liberality out of Purgatory. So that he had just cause of much content in what he had done, and of encouragement to proceed in those charitable works by which, doubtless, many more souls would be delivered out of that place of punishment; and then, taking a kind leave, they returned the same way they came.[1]

11. We need not doubt but Eusebius was

[1] *Spec. Exempl.* tit. Defunct. exemplo xxv.; Pinellus, *De Altera Vita*, l. i. cap. xxviii.; De Bonniers, *Advocat. Animarum*, cap. ii.; *Histor. Sardiniæ*, &c.

unspeakably comforted in this strange occurrence, and must needs increase in devotion and liberality towards the souls which he found by experience to be so mindful of paying, and overpaying, their debts. And I pray God that others who have bags of gold and whole lordships to cast away at dice and cards, and waste in bravery and Epicurean feasting, may learn by this example, and by what hath been said before, rather to spend their riches hereafter with assurance of getting a hundred for one, than with mighty probability of losing thousands for nothing, and their own souls into the bargain.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

OF INDULGENCES.

AMONGST the means of relieving the souls in Purgatory, one of the chiefest is to gain such Indulgences for them as are so granted, that they may be applied unto them. Now because, either for want of instruction in this point (which is not so easily understood) or for dulness of belief in it (because we, who are so bad, are hard to believe God should be so good), very many are lamentably negligent in the use of so great a treasure, I have thought it convenient to handle this point, which indeed is so necessary to be declared, somewhat largely.

2. For the perfect understanding of this matter, we must call to mind that which hath been sufficiently proved before in the first part,[1] how that after any sin is forgiven there doth commonly remain some guilt of pain due to so foul a crime. Well, then, the grant of an Indulgence is the grant of the remission of this pain remaining after the sin is forgiven; which grant is communicated unto us to supply graciously our want of due satisfactions by applying the superabundant satisfaction of Christ our Lord, which by His Vicar on earth are to this

[1] Chap. i.

end applied unto us by the performance commonly of some work enjoined us for gaining of this Indulgence.

3. So that you see here arises three things to be explicated. First, that the satisfactions of Christ are so abundant, that they are sufficient to supply any want of satisfaction which any man or men can have. Secondly, that there is a Vicar of Christ on earth, who hath lawful power to supply the superabundant satisfactions of Christ for the supply of any want of satisfaction which we may be in. Thirdly, something must also be declared of the things which by Christ's Vicar use to be enjoined, that those satisfactions of Christ may be applied in this manner unto us.

4. First, then, that the satisfactions of Christ are so superabundant that they may be a cause sufficient to supply any, though never so great want of satisfactions, is easily granted by all; and clear of itself, if we do but remember that the Blood of Christ was the Blood of God, and consequently of so inestimable worth and value, that the shedding of one only drop of it was an act abundantly satisfactory for the sins of a whole world. Now then, our Saviour shedding this His divinely precious Blood, not by small drops, but pouring it forth by plentiful showers, did heap up an immense treasure of satisfactions, superabundantly sufficient to satisfy for any pains due to any sin or sins whatsoever; for else our offences have been greater than His satisfactions. There wanteth not, therefore, a cause even superabundantly sufficient to supply any possible

want of satisfaction which any man can be in: so infinite a treasure is this.

5. Secondly, there is in the Church lawful power and authority to apply to such as want satisfactions these superabundant satisfactions of Christ: for otherwise this infinite treasure of the superabundant satisfactions of Christ our Lord, heaped up for us, and for us only, would be wholly unprofitable to us, and merely superfluous. It would be like the treasure which that miserable wretch in St. Luke did keep lapped up in his handkerchief, or the talent which that other, in St. Matthew, hid in the ground. Now, as the Holy Scripture saith, "Wisdom that is hid, and a treasure that is not seen, what profit is there in them both?"[1]

6. Wherefore, that this treasure may profit us, as it is superabundant, there must be left on earth power to dispense forth out of this superabundancy as much as our necessities may require. Which being so, to whom should we think this power to have been given rather than to him to whom it was said, "Feed My sheep;"[2] rather than to him to whom it was said, "I will give to thee the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven"?[3] For it is all one to have the keys of Heaven, and to have authority to remove the bar of the lock which shutteth Heaven's door; such a bar as sin is, not fully satisfied for. I would know, I say, in whom we should put this power, if not in him, for to him the words following do clearly give this commission: "Whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed also in Heaven."

[1] Ecclus. xli. 17. [2] St. John xxi. 17. [3] St. Matt. xvi. 19.

Mark that word "whatsoever," that is, what thing soever it be which can bind a soul, whether it be guilt of sin, or guilt of pain due to sin, if thou dost loosen this band on earth, it shall be loosened in Heaven. This was a promise which doubtless Christ, Who always made good His word, did perfectly keep.

7. Out of this which we have said, this convincing argument may be taken. There is power left in the Church to forgive sin in itself, which doth deserve the pains we speak of; therefore it is no wonder that there should be power to forgive the suffering of those pains. That there is power left to forgive sins, the text of Scripture doth literally affirm. The Protestant, if he standeth to the words of the Scripture, hath not a word to say. He must fly to his own exposition of the Word, which exposition why should any man in prudence follow, rather than the exposition of the most learned and most holy Fathers of the primitive Church, who studied the Scriptures day and night, and may be far more prudently thought to have understood them aright than those who live in an age so far from Christ, entangled with so many uncertain opinions, or rather errors?

8. If the Protestants tell us they were men, and might err, we will desire them to remember that they also are men, and at least as likely to err as they were. If the Protestant saith he followeth Scripture, the plain words of Scripture are clear against him on this point, which is a point fundamental, for it concerns the forgiveness of sin, a

thing wholly necessary to salvation. You all profess the Scripture to speak clear in points fundamental and necessary to salvation. Tell me, then, what do these words clearly sound, "Whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, it shall be loosed also in Heaven"? And again, "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them"?[1] The Novatian heretics did say (and our sectaries say the same) "that they do yield reverence unto God, to Whom alone they reserve the power of forgiving sins," as St. Ambrose testifieth. But what saith this holy Doctor to them?[2] He tells them that no sort of men yield less reverence to God than they do in proceeding thus, and he gives a convincing reason to prove this his saying. Hear his own words: "Yea, no men do Christ a greater injury than these men, who will make void His gift. For whereas He in His Gospel hath said, 'Whose sins you forgive, shall be forgiven them,' who, I pray, honours Christ more—he who assents to this, or he who resists it? But they tell us, they pardon less sins" (for this was the answer of the Novatians). "But God," saith St. Ambrose, "makes not this distinction, Who gives this license to His priests, without any exception." Christ's words are absolute, "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them." And St. Chrysologus, writing on these words, saith thus, "Where be those men that assert sins cannot be forgiven by men unto men? Peter doth forgive sins, and with all joy doth receive the penitent; and he embraceth this power, granted by God unto

[1] St. John xx. 23. [2] *De Pœnit.* l. i. cap. ii.

all priests."[1] St. Leo the Great writeth thus: "Christ Jesus gave this power to the governors of the Church, that by the door of reconciliation they should admit them to the communion of the sacraments, being purged."[2] But what more clear than that of St. Chrysostom? "It was only lawful to the priests of the Jews to cleanse, or, to speak more truly, not to cleanse, but to approve as cleansed, the leprosy of the body. But to our priests it was granted, not to cleanse the leprosy of the body, but it was granted unto them, I do not say to approve for cleansed, but thoroughly to cleanse the filth of the soul."[3] Here you see condemned, in as clear words as can be spoken, the error of the Protestants, who say that the power of our priests is to declare our sins forgiven, and not to forgive them; but St. Chrysostom saith that he doth not say this: "I do not say to approve for cleansed, but thoroughly to cleanse the filth of the soul." This being proved, let us proceed.

9. If Christ's Vicar upon earth hath the power to forgive the sins which did deserve eternal pain, and consequently to loosen the band of eternal pains, can it seem much that he should have power to loosen the bands of temporal pain, with which the sinner is tied after his sins are remitted? The contrary surely would seem the greater wonder. Yet because (and so I come to declare the third point which I undertook, concerning the thing enjoined to be performed for the gaining of Indul-

[1] *Serm.* lxxxiv. [2] Epist. xci. *ad Theodos.*
[3] *De Sacerd.* initio l. iii.

gences), because, I say, all power given by Christ unto His Vicar is well ordered, and granted for the edification, not for the destruction of the Church, this authority of dispensing the treasures of Christ's superabundant satisfactions was given so that it might be dispensed forth with prudent liberality, not poured out with lavishing prodigality. Wherefore all Protestants and Catholics are to understand that our most esteemed divines in this age are of opinion that it is not in the power of the Pope to grant an Indulgence for the performance of a good work so little that it cannot be a proportionable cause to grant this favour, as, for example, and it is the example of St. Bonaventure,[1] to grant a great sinner a Plenary Indulgence for giving an alms of three halfpence.

10. But it is exceedingly to be marked, that when the Pope granteth a great Indulgence, which may be obtained by doing of some thing, perhaps as small as giving an alms of three halfpence, the reason of the grant of this Indulgence is not merely that so little a good work should be performed, for then (as St. Bonaventure teacheth) it would be an imprudent and an impossible grant; but the reason of the grant of such an Indulgence is the obtaining of some very great good, and a good so great (for this Bellarmine seemeth to require), that the obtaining of it maketh more to God's glory, and is more grateful to Him, than it would be to have our forgiven sins punished in Purgatory with due rigour of justice. For example, such a good would be the

[1] St. Bonaventure, iv. dist. 20, q. 9.

conversion of heretics, constant peace in the Church of God, the notable advancement of some great or some necessary act of piety, faith, religion, charity, &c. The obtaining of such goods as these is the thing which moveth the Pope to grant these Indulgences, and to dispense forth the treasures committed unto him by Christ for the greater glory of Christ, which is a very prudent and well-ordered dispensation; for so those who are put in charge with others' goods, do most faithfully exercise their charge if they lay them out for the greater benefit of those who did put them in trust.

11. I see well that it will be objected, that though the Pope doth piously and prudently to employ the treasure committed to his charge for obtaining of a greater good, yet it seemeth that he doth imprudently to use, for obtaining of it, such an unproportionable and unfit means as is to enjoin only the performance of so little a good work to be done for this end, as for example, to enjoin only the saying of five *Pater nosters* for obtaining so great a good as is the conversion of infidels, extirpation of heretics, &c. And therefore, though the cause of this grant be reasonable, yet the means applied seem most unreasonable. I answer that the performance of so little a good work as the saying of five *Pater nosters* for obtaining the good for which the Indulgence is granted, may be a very effectual means for obtaining of so great a good. Which that I may show, let us but consider what doth daily happen when the Pope granteth such an Indulgence as this is. The grant of this Indulgence is no

sooner made known unto the Church, but presently you shall see all faithful people, by thousands, with one heart and one soul, doing that which is necessary for gaining of this Indulgence, that is, by a true, entire, and hearty confession and contrition, putting themselves (if they fear they were not in it before) in a state of grace and friendship with God, and then after this (for this must be done for gaining of Indulgences) devoutly performing the good work enjoined them to be performed, and performing it to the end for which it was enjoined. Now, though this good work be but little, though it be but the saying of five *Pater nosters* for the aforesaid intention, yet when even so few prayers are said with one heart and with one soul by so many thousands of thousands as use (by the grant of so great an Indulgence exacting only the performance of so small a work) to be stirred up to the devout recital of these prayers, the quantity of all these prayers put together amounteth to an immense sum, a sum so great, and made up by such a uniform devotion of so many faithful people, that it may in prudence be thought to be a means sufficient to effect the good intended.

12. Hence it appeareth that the performance of a little thing may be an effectual means to obtain a great good, when by the exacting of a thing so small everybody is invited to do what is necessary to the perfect performance of it; whereas if they were invited by a small Indulgence, or by a great one which could not be gained but by some great good work, as fasting many days, saying many prayers,

and the like, very few would be induced to gain this Indulgence. And so it may well happen that Christ's Vicar can scarce use any means more effectual to obtain a good which maketh so much to God's glory and the benefit of His Church than by granting some great Indulgence, which may be gained by doing some small good work for his intention. For it is very likely that a far greater quantity of good works will be raised when every one contributeth a little, than when almost everybody layeth aside all care of doing anything, because without he doth a great deal he is never the nearer, forasmuch as concerneth the gaining of the Indulgence. We used to say, 'Tis well for poor men that brass farthings go currently, for now everybody comes easily off with a farthing, whereas their charity would hardly be great enough to part with a penny.

13. All which we have said, hath far less difficulty when an Indulgence is granted to bring into public practice some important act of piety, or to hinder decay of some devotion, especially of some virtue necessary to salvation, as faith, charity, contrition, &c. Because in this case, not only all these things do make more to God's glory than by ordinary severity of punishing by the pains of Purgatory; but it is easily understood how these so important things may effectually be procured by the performance of things but small in themselves, though great in their effects. For example, it is a thing most important that all faithful people should profess union with their Supreme Pastor, and also the decay of this union is much to be feared, by reason

of the power of heresy. Again, this union may effectually be brought into great request by making sometimes in the year some public and solemn profession of it; which may be done by coming humbly to receive his benediction on some great festivity; therefore the Pope both may, and doth, most piously and prudently, in granting a great Indulgence for performing an act in itself so easy and little as is to ask his benediction.

14. In like manner true faith, without which it is impossible to please God, is lost by obstinately rejecting the authority of the Church, though in matters otherwise of no exceeding great consequence; therefore the maintaining of faith in all such matters, when there is danger of the loss of it, maketh very much to God's glory and the good of souls. Now the pious belief of these points, so important, may efficaciously be upholden, and brought into public practice and veneration, by the practice of some acts, which are most easily performed; for example sake, prayer for the dead, veneration of relics, gaining of Indulgences, are points of faith which heretics seek by all means to overthrow. Again, they may be efficaciously maintained in a continual and most devout practice, if the Pope would grant some great Indulgence for making some frequent pious acts, which may revive these devotions, and keep the practice of them in daily use.

15. Now, to stop in a word the mouths of Protestants, which are so wide open to cry down these Indulgences, I will only put them in mind of their

own doctrine. They say: A man is justified by faith only: insomuch that if a man were as great a sinner as could be, yet this man, if he would but make one act of true faith, would be in a moment justified, and not so much as liable to the least punishment for all his innumerable and enormous sins. Is any pardon, Indulgence, or Jubilee, so easily obtained, or so incredible as this? Do but believe (which will not pain your bones in the least), and all, all, though it were a thousand times more, is wholly forgiven you; and sin as much to-morrow (if it be possible) as you have sinned in all the days of your life, and you shall not cease for all this to be justified, if you do not cease to believe, which (as they say) you cannot cease to do. Was there ever the like device to make wide the strait gate of Heaven? Whereas, if you will obtain a Catholic Indulgence, first you must believe, but this is not all, as it is with the Protestants; secondly, you must have true hope; thirdly, you must be in perfect charity, and in the state of grace, and consequently you must have had a true and hearty repentance of all your sins, you must have a firm purpose to forsake them, you must have made an entire and contrite confession of them, you must, if you have wronged any man, have made him due satisfaction; and after all this, you must do the thing which is required for the obtaining of the Indulgence, which (though in some occasions it be little) many times it is the fast of three days, the visiting of churches, the devout praying in them, the giving of alms, and the like.

16. And all this being duly performed, that which is wanting to the full satisfaction of the pain due to your forgiven sins, shall be graciously supplied by the superabundant satisfactions of Christ our Lord, applied by His Vicar unto you to this end. So that, even after all this, no one sin is by the Indulgence forgiven you; for all Catholics teach that all the Indulgences in the world cannot forgive the least mortal sin, no, nor venial, as most affirm; but all that is forgiven by way of Indulgence is the pain to which the sinner was liable even after his sin was forgiven him. And, therefore, if the sin remain still unforgiven, the pain due unto it cannot by any Indulgence be forgiven. And this is a great reason why so few do obtain a perfect Plenary Indulgence of all that pain which they are liable unto, because there be but few who use due diligence to procure all their sins, even venial, to be fully forgiven them. For who is he who remains not addicted to some venially offensive affection? Whence it must needs happen that until we be perfectly converted from all venial affections to sin, we shall not obtain a full Plenary Indulgence of all our sins. For as long as any sin remains unrepented, the remission of the pain due to that sin will never be obtained by any Indulgence. And this is a benefit so great, that the serious consideration thereof ought to quicken our diligence in the pious use of Indulgences.

17. By this doctrine all may clearly see how far we are from opening a gap to liberty in sinning, whilst we so much maintain the virtue of Indulgences. For who seeth not, that whilst to the

gaining of a pardon of any sin, we exact as a necessary condition the hearty and unfeigned retractation of that sin, we wage war as fiercely against sin, and stand upon as vigorous a defiance of all (even venial) affections, as any maintainers of any contrary doctrine. Add to this that we still teach no Indulgence, either for living or dead, to be of value in the Court of Heaven, unless there be a sufficient cause for the grant of that Indulgence, and a work proportionable to so great a grant be exacted of us, as hath been more fully declared.[1] Wherefore we tell every one that we never promise fully any assured pardon to either living or dead upon the performance of the work exacted in the grant of such Indulgence, unless the said grant be issued forth upon sufficient cause, and require the performance of some work bearing due proportion to the Indulgences granted. Only God can tell when these circumstances concur. We, remaining doubtful in each particular grant, give no man any such undoubted assurance as excludes all fear; and, consequently, we never exclude all other possible diligences, or slacken their industry in applying all other good means, which any one's learning or piety can suggest. We exhort all, by all means, to make their best use of the best practices which the Church teaches, to cancel their own sins, or to expiate the sins of their deceased brother. But among these practices of the Church we place the use of Indulgences. For we know (as I have shown in my first part)[2] that when Peter de Osma did presume to

[1] Nn. 9—11. [2] Chap. xii.

teach that the Bishop of Rome could not pardon the pain of Purgatory, Sixtus IV., then Chief Pastor of the Church, condemned the proposition in these words: "By Apostolical authority we do declare all and every one of the aforesaid propositions [of which this is one] to be false, to be contrary to the Catholic Church, to be erroneous, scandalous, altogether disagreeing from evangelical truth, and containing manifest heresy. Dated at Rome, at St. Peter's, A.D. 1478." We know also that Leo X., in his Bull against Luther, having recited several propositions taught by him, among others puts down these three:

"I. The treasures of the Church, whence the Pope giveth Indulgences, are not the merits of Christ and His Saints.

"II. Indulgences to those who gain them truly, do not avail them to gain pardon of the pain due to actual sins by the Divine Justice.

"III. To six kinds of men Indulgences are neither necessary nor profitable, to wit, to the dead," &c.

Then follows their condemnation in these words: "We do condemn, reprove, and wholly reject, all and every one of the aforesaid articles and errors, as being respectively heretical, or scandalous, or false, or offensive to pious ears, or seductive of simple minds, and contrary to Catholic verity." This last censure being put conjunctively, falls upon all the aforesaid propositions, so that they be all condemned as contrary to Catholic verity. Whence there follow these words: "Forbidding in virtue of holy obedience and under pain of excom-

munication, *latæ sententiæ* (the sentence of which is already given by the tenour of the present), that no man do presume under any colour that may be sought out, covertly or openly, to assert, affirm, or defend the aforesaid errors or any of them." We know, therefore, that the Church doth so own the doctrine contrary to those propositions, that it is not lawful for any child of the Church, under pain of mortal disobedience, to teach or affirm any of these contrary articles. The reader who desires more full satisfaction in these points may read what we have largely declared in the first part of this treatise.[1]

18. This sufficeth to make us rest assured that such Indulgences as by the See Apostolic are granted as applicable to the souls in Purgatory, may be available unto them when they be duly granted. And though we have no infallible means to know when they be duly granted, or when not, yet, when we see the Chief Pastor of the Church, after a grave consultation of the matter, to judge himself to have sufficient cause to grant such Indulgences, we also cannot but hold it probable that this Indulgence is duly granted. And the probable hope of obtaining so great a good ought, with as great reason, to excite us to the purchase thereof with all care and diligence; as the probable hope of recovering our health or saving our life by such a medicine, doth, according to reason, move all reasonable creatures to make use of the said medicine, although they have no undoubted, but only a probable, assurance that it will work the

[1] Nn. 2—9.

effect desired. And the same is to be said concerning Indulgences for the living, yet in both cases our hope and confidence of obtaining the pardon is then heightened to a higher degree when the cause of the grant of the Indulgence, and the work appointed for the gaining thereof, bears a greater proportion with the effect. Hence it is that we most prudently rely with greater confidence of gaining a Plenary Indulgence by entrance into Religion, and there making the three substantial vows of Poverty, Chastity, Obedience, thus casting off from ourselves for ever the dominion of all earthly goods, the enjoying all carnal pleasures, and the free use of our own will, than by performance of other far more unproportionable works. Wherefore I think that, among such Plenary Indulgences as are obtainable by those who lead a secular life in the world, there is scarcely any (speaking of such as be practically gainable by most) more assured than that which this present Head Pastor of the Church hath not long since granted to all, either men or women, who for eight continual days shall make the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, in the manner expressed in the said grant. For what action (commonly speaking) is ever performed by any secular lay person bearing a greater proportion to entire remission of all his sins than the attending for eight days together to these meditations, which, by the experience of so many thousands, have been found so effectual to reform a sinful, and to form a new, truly virtuous life? The importance of the matter hath enforced so long a stay upon this subject.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

TWO OTHER MEANS OF HIGH PERFECTION, BY WHICH WE MAY RELIEVE THE SOULS IN PURGATORY.

THE first is, to offer up all our good actions, thoughts, words, and sufferings, desiring God to accept of them for the relief of such a soul or souls in Purgatory; to offer them up all, I say, as they are satisfactory, for so they do either only or chiefly profit them, and so we remain free to apply the same works as they are impetratory for obtaining anything we desire to pray for. Yet I would not have this so understood as though we were not in the first place to satisfy any obligation, which perhaps we might have, of employing some part of our works for other intentions; neither would I advise any man to perform the penances enjoined him in confession for satisfaction of the sins of any other besides himself. But out of these or such-like cases, I know not how we can better apply our actions, as they are satisfactory; for thus all our actions are not less but more meritorious, not less but more impetratory, not less but more satisfactory: thus we may hope to escape all or the greatest part of Purgatory pains. Wherefore it is not against charity towards ourselves to be thus liberal. All

these things have been proved in the former chapters.

2. A man would think it were not possible to proceed any further in this charitable devotion. But charity is so witty in her inventions that she hath found out a way to give more than she hath or ever had in this life. You shall see this verified in a strange manner and an unheard-of example, which cannot be well understood without we first let all know that, whensoever any one dieth in the Society of Jesus, even the meanest Brother in the house, it is ordained by the Constitutions of the same Society, that all of that house, where the party deceaseth, who are priests, are to say three Masses for his soul, and those who are not priests, three pair of beads, and throughout the whole Province (which many times consist of seven or eight hundred persons) every priest is to say two Masses, and each one of the rest two pair of beads, for the same intention. And besides all these prayers, every priest of our Society throughout the whole world is obliged every week to say one Mass, and each one of those who are not priests one pair of beads, for those of their Order deceased out of their particular Provinces, for if the deceased be of the same Province, then they are to say for them two a piece, as even now hath been said. Hence it appeareth that there dieth not any one in the Society for whom a very great multitude of Masses and prayers are not said. Let us put a probable supposition. Suppose there be sixteen thousand people in the Society, and that one half of this number be priests, the rest either

students, novices, or lay-brothers; let us also suppose that, taking one week with another, there die out of this number four a week. This supposed, it followeth that every one of these four shall have for his part alone near two thousand Masses and as many pair of beads said for his soul out of the Province where he died, besides those which are said for him in the house and Province in which he died. This being so, hear now a rare act of charity:

3. Father Ferdinand Monsoy, of the Society of Jesus, a man of rare sanctity, when he came to die, knowing, and in that hour lively apprehending, what comfort he might take in the multitude of Masses and prayers which he knew should after his death be said for his soul, according to the rule of his Order, was, notwithstanding, so inflamed with ardent charity towards the souls of his and Christ's brethren suffering in Purgatory, that he bequeathed unto them by will and testament all the Masses and other prayers which after his departure should be offered up for his soul; and so departed this life, either directly towards Heaven (as is most probable) or a welcome guest to the souls in Purgatory.[1] Can charity proceed any further? Let, then, the imitation of this example be a second means for them whose charity burns so much hotter than Purgatory. If a third means of relieving these souls more perfect than this could be found, yet all that could be done ought not to seem too much, seeing it is done for

[1] Euseb. Nieremberg. *Tract. de Purgatorio.*

Christ's sake, for His brethren, for souls so esteemed by Him that what is done for them He taketh it as done unto Himself.

4. If any demand whether these two devotions may be securely practised by all kinds of men, what quality soever they be of, I answer that they may, with great profit of their own and their neighbours' souls and advancement of God's glory, if, for more caution, this condition be added: "As far as it is suitable to God's holy will, and maketh to the greatest increase of His glory, I offer up, for the relief of the souls in Purgatory, the whole satisfactory virtue of whatsoever good I shall do or evil I shall suffer all the time of my whole life, and all the prayers and other good works whatsoever which shall be performed for me after my death; so far, I say, as this shall be most pleasing to God." For what danger can there be in this act? Can that be any way subject to be done amiss which is wholly subjected to the Divine will? Two extremes might be dangerous in that which concerns devotion for the souls in Purgatory—the first, by showing them too little charity; the second, by forgetting well-ordered charity towards ourselves and our neighbours here on earth. As for the first, this charity cannot be too little, because we do for the souls as great a part of our actions as God would have us, for we offer them all, so far as is most agreeable to His holy will; and as for the second, we forget not to reserve as great a part of our works for ourselves and our neighbours on earth as God would have us, for we give away no more than best pleaseth Him

and maketh most to His greater honour. So that I cannot discover the least shadow of danger in practising these devotions in the manner above said; for would any man do more for himself or less for these poor souls, than God would have him?

5. The Reverend Father Eusebius Nieremberg, in a treatise he wrote of Purgatory, did handle this point so well, that two worthy Doctors and Professors of Divinity at Lyons, in France, diligently examining the force of his reasons, were so convinced thereby that both of them, together with divers of their scholars, gave all the satisfactions of their whole life to the souls in Purgatory.[1] This devotion, in fine, hath been practised by many great servants of God highly recommended for their piety by most grave authors, and God did reward St. Gertrude for it in that liberal manner before mentioned; and if it be used with the caution now spoken of, no man can suspect it, neither can there be any want of devotion in adding a condition so pious.

[1] *Libell. de modo se cito ditandi.*

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

TO WHAT SOULS IN PURGATORY WE ARE CHIEFLY TO APPLY OUR SATISFACTORY WORKS.

I KNOW not how to begin this chapter better than by answering an objection which some speculative wits may chance to stumble at. "Alas!" will some say, "what good will all my poor works do when they come to be shared among so many thousand souls as be in Purgatory? They will be like a little loaf of bread amongst a great multitude of beggars, which, if it be equally cut, every one will scarce receive a crumb." These men seem to suppose themselves the only men in the world who show charity to the souls in Purgatory. For if there be others (and many others) who by God's grace are no less charitable and liberal than they, it is not hard to understand how, by the help of many, many may be holpen. That which Thomas or William doth contribute towards the maintenance of a whole army will not afford every soldier a farthing, and yet, because others in great multitudes contribute as well as they, whole armies are easily maintained in a flourishing estate. So, whilst many devout souls relieve these helpless souls, many helpless souls are relieved.

2. And, indeed, we have great reason to show charity to all. For, first, the law of nature crieth out unto us: "All things therefore whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do you also to them."[1] Secondly, the written law in plain terms saith: "Love thy neighbour as thyself." Thirdly, our Saviour addeth a strange force also to this precept: "This is My commandment, that you love one another, as I have loved you."[2] Now, how He loved us, all His life, and most of all His blessed Death, doth testify. Fourthly, all souls are so esteemed by Christ, that He taketh that charity which is showed to the least of them as kindly as if it were done to Himself in Person. In fine, the virtue of mercy calls upon us to assist all who are in extreme necessity, as these poor souls are. These be forcible reasons, moving us to assist all that be in Purgatory.

3. Yet it is in no case to be misliked, but it is rather a most recommendable devotion, to pray for some souls in particular, and in the first place for those to which, besides those general reasons now alleged for all, we may have some peculiar obligation. For some we may be bound to pray by our own oath, promise, compact, rule, &c. For others by the virtue of piety, as our parents, spiritual Fathers, kindred, friends, acquaintance, &c. For some again, out of gratitude, as our benefactors, spiritual and temporal, &c. These reasons be more particular, and therefore they ought to prevail more with us than those other general reasons, for which we are

[1] St. Matt. vii. 12. [2] St John xv. 12.

to pray for all men, because the general reasons make as much for these as for any other; and besides, they have also their particular reasons.

4. But when we know not such particular reasons, as they are, yet it will be piously done to pray for some souls in particular, though in a manner more general. For example, for that soul whose delivery maketh most to God's glory, whose relief or releasement the glorious Virgin Mary most desires; for those who were most devoted to her; for those who be in greatest necessity, most of all forlorn, &c.; for those who are so near their delivery, that by our small devotions they may be perfectly set free, and, consequently, immediately glorify God, pray for us, &c. In fine, here every man may do what is most suitable to his private devotion, which notwithstanding is best when it is ordered by the most perfect rule of God's greater glory. Wherefore, for my part, I make choice to pray more especially for that soul whose relief or deliverance makes most to God's glory. To me indeed this soul is unknown, but God's all-seeing eye is presently cast upon her.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

THE PERFECT PRACTICE OF ALL CONTAINED IN THIS BOOK.

WHOSOEVER to God's glory, the good of his own soul, and relief of those in Purgatory, desireth to put in practice all which hath been treated of in this book, must first above all things have a care to put and keep himself in a state of grace, for if he hath not the grace and charity of God, though he should distribute all his substance to the poor or all his works to the souls in Purgatory, it would profit him nothing at all. True it is, the prayers and sacrifices which by my procurement are offered for the souls lose not their force and efficacy in order to their relief. But the satisfactory virtue which my good works would have if performed in a state of grace, and the great merit which might accrue to me by the performance of them, is all lost whilst I live in sin. I know the infinite mercies of God be often so great that, to such as are much addicted to works of mercy, He sometimes most graciously bestows the unspeakable benefit of true and hearty contrition and repentance, which ought to be a strong motive to such as live in sin not to cast off the daily practice of good works. But they must

know that God hath not obliged Himself thereunto by any promise, as He hath to reward all good works done in grace. Let it then be the first document to him who intends to be good to the souls in Purgatory, to be so good to his own soul as still to be careful to live in a state of grace.

2. Secondly, he must not slubber over his devotion in a careless manner, giving his works away, and little marking why or what he gives, or doing it only because he conceives it to be a good devotion. But he must take some short time to consider the motives set down in this treatise, and must ponder each motive by itself until his will be stirred up effectually to afford all the relief he is able to the distressed souls. Neither is this any long business, because even the reading attentively these motives is sufficient to move any heart to help such helpless souls; and this is the thing we desire, for we little regard the being moved to a soft and tender compassion, which God knows is often very fruitless and soon vanisheth away.

3. Wherefore, that all may perform this with little or no difficulty, we will set down in plain and full words the manner of making perfectly all those acts which in any part of this treatise have been recommended. But let no man think, unless he would make a meditation of this matter (as he may do with great fruit in the space of half an hour), that we would have him make all these acts at one time, but rather that he exercise now one, now another, more or fewer, according to his leisure and devotion, yet it will be best to exercise often the

most perfect. Now, for the reader's commodity, we will cite the chapters where the matters are treated at large which here are only touched in a word.

4. The first act, answerable to the first, second, and third chapters, may be thus made: "Oh, how excessive is the bitterness of those pains which these afflicted souls do suffer in Purgatory! What a misery it is to be banished (though for a time only) from the face of God! In what a sea of affliction must that poor soul be which for a short space is condemned to remain in this pitiful state! Wherefore, O my soul, afford these souls of thy brethren all the help thou canst: pray for them, exercise acts of penance for them. Help them by devoutly frequenting the holy sacraments and procuring others to do the same; offer up as often as thou canst, and, as often as thou canst, procure the Holy Sacrifice of Mass may be offered for them; give alms that they may be prayed for; relieve them by all Indulgences which may be gained for them; let all the satisfactory actions and sufferings of thy whole life be offered up for them, so far as it is suitable to God's holy will, and so far as it maketh to His greater glory; bequeath unto them all the good works which after thy departure out of this life shall be done for thee. O Lord, accept of this my most hearty oblation, made in behalf of my distressed brethren."

5. The second act, answerable to the fourth chapter.[1] "O my God, how great is Thy excellency

[1] N. 2.

worth, and perfection! All honour and glory is due unto Thee. I, poor creature, know not how more perfectly to procure Thy Divine Majesty to be praised, honoured, and glorified, than by doing all I am able to discover some soul or souls which, being released by my means from Purgatory, may honour, praise, and glorify Thy sacred Majesty in the highest manner. Wherefore, O my soul, to this end afford these souls of thy brethren all the help thou canst. Pray for them," &c., as it followeth in the former act.

6. The third act, answerable also to the fourth chapter.[1] "O most merciful, liberal, and good God, how many and how great benefits hast Thou, with unspeakable love, heaped upon me! How shall I be able to requite this Thy bounty, mercy, and goodness? I, poor creature, know not how more perfectly to procure Thy Divine Majesty," &c., all as followeth in the second act.

7. The fourth act, answerable to the fourth chapter.[2] "How many and how enormous have been the sins by which I have dishonoured Thee, my good God! Thee, O infinite Excellency! Thee, O immense Goodness! I, poor creature, know not how more perfectly to procure Thy Divine Majesty," &c., as before in the second act.

8. The fifth act, answerable to the fourth chapter also.[3] "O my dear Jesus, Thou lovest the souls of my brethren so dearly, that whatsoever for Thy sake is done unto them Thou accountest done unto Thyself. Wherefore, O my soul, to this end afford

[1] N. 3. [2] N. 4. [3] N. 5.

the souls of thy brethren," &c., as before in the first act. But because, after this plain and distinct setting down all these acts in order, some may desire to have them all composed in one shorter form, which they may add every day to their ordinary morning's oblation, that so they may the more easily offer up daily either all the works of that day, or (if their devotion moves them thereunto) all the satisfactory good works of their whole life, I have thought it expedient to draw up into one act the substance of all that hath been comprised in all the former acts together, which may be done thus: "That to the uttermost of my power I may relieve the souls of my dear brethren from those their excessive pains and that yet more painful banishment from the face of God, and shorten their so long sufferings; that I may procure them a more speedy passage to eternal bliss; that I may, in the best manner known unto me, procure the sovereign majesty of my dearest God to be more perfectly honoured and glorified; that I may return to my most bountiful Benefactor the noblest kind of thanksgiving which lieth in my power; that I may more perfectly repair His honour, which by innumerable sins I have so much violated, with the most grateful satisfaction I can devise; that I may, in fine, perform a service so acceptable and pleasing to Christ our Lord, to His dear Mother, and to my most honoured patrons, St. Joseph, SS. NN., and all the blessed spirits in Heaven, who so joy in their brother's good as in their own—behold, I do offer unto Thee, my God, the most tender Lover

of souls, I do offer up unto Thee this day, for the relief of such a soul, or souls, or of all the souls in Purgatory, not only all the good work (as they are satisfactory) which I shall do or any other shall do for me this day, but also even all the good works which ever through the course of my whole life either I shall perform or any one at any time shall offer for me; yea, those prayers, sacrifices, or other good works which they shall at any time offer for my soul after my departure, I do now out of all these motives offer up unto Thee, as far as this may be done in a manner pleasing unto Thee. Receive, O my dearest Jesus, this my small oblation, which I make in behalf of those souls for which Thou didst shed every drop of Thy Blood, offered up together in the union of all which through Thy whole life Thou didst do or suffer for our souls, that, by Thy most precious merits, this my oblation may be more grateful to Thy Eternal Father, to Whose infinite mercy I commend my own poor soul and the souls of all my brethren, by the merits of Thy most Precious Blood. Amen."

9. Here thou hast in brief the practice of this whole devotion, a devotion by which we may purchase many great commodities and suffer no discommodity, by which our works may become more meritorious, our prayers more impetratory, our actions more highly satisfactory, and finally, by which we may have great hope to escape either all or at least a great part of Purgatory.

10. Neither is there any danger of violating charity due to ourselves by the practice of this

devotion, but we may rather offend against charity by making slight of a devotion which might have been so beneficial to us. For it is clear out of the precedent chapters we can lose nothing and must needs gain much—much for ourselves, much for our neighbour, and much for the glory of Almighty God, to Whom be all praise and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

APPENDIX.

THE HEROIC ACT OF CHARITY.

Of all acts of personal devotion in favour of the Faithful Departed, the most comprehensive is that to which the Church has given the fullest encouragement. Pope Benedict XIII., Pope Pius VI., and Pope Pius IX. have granted magnificent Indulgences to all who perform "the Heroic Act of Charity, or Offering of all works of satisfaction and suffrages in behalf of the souls in Purgatory." The following account of those Indulgences is taken from the authorized translation of the Roman *Raccolta*, by the Reverend Father Ambrose St. John, of the Birmingham Oratory.

This Heroic Act of Charity in behalf of the souls in Purgatory consists in a voluntary offering made in their favour by any one of the faithful of all works of satisfaction done by him in this life, as well as of all suffrages which shall be offered for him after his death; by this act he deposits them all into the hands of the Blessed Virgin, that she may distribute them in behalf of those holy souls whom it is her good pleasure to deliver from the pains of Purgatory, at the same time that he declares that by this offering he only foregoes in their behalf the special and personal fruit of each satisfactory work; so that, being a priest, he is not hindered from applying the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass according to the intention of those who give him alms.

This Heroic Act of Charity, also called a Vow or Oblation, was instituted by Father Gaspar Oliden, a Theatine; for although it was not unknown in former ages, it was he who propagated it, and it was at his prayer that it was enriched with many Indulgences; first by Pope Benedict XIII., in a decree of August 23, 1728; and then by Pope Pius VI., in a decree of December 12, 1788; these Indulgences were finally specified by our Sovereign Pontiff, Pius IX., in a decree of the Sacred Congregation of Indulgences, of September 30, 1852. They are as follows:

1. An Indult of a privileged altar, personally, every day in the year, to all priests who have made this offering.

2. A Plenary Indulgence, applicable only to the departed, to all the faithful who have made this offering, whenever they go to Holy Communion, provided they visit a church or public oratory, and pray there for a time according to the mind of His Holiness.

3. A Plenary Indulgence, every Monday, to all who hear Mass in suffrage for the souls in Purgatory, provided they visit the church and pray as above.

4. All Indulgences granted or to be granted, even though not applicable to the dead, which are gained by the faithful who have made this offering, may be applied to the holy souls in Purgatory.

5. Lastly, the same Sovereign Pontiff, Pope Pius IX., having regard to the young who are not yet communicants, as well as to the poor sick, to those who are afflicted with chronic disorders, to the aged, to farm-labourers, prisoners, and others who are debarred from communicating and unable to hear Mass on Mondays, vouchsafed by another decree of the Sacred Congregation of Indulgences, of November 20, 1854, to declare that, for all the faithful who cannot hear Mass on Monday, the Mass heard on Sundays should be available for gaining the Indulgence No. 3; and that in favour of those who are not yet communicants, or who are hindered from communicating, he leaves it at the disposal of their respective Ordinaries to authorize confessors to commute the works enjoined.

And note, lastly, that although this act of charity is denominated a vow in some printed tracts, in which also is

given a formula for making the offering, no inference is to be drawn therefrom that this offering binds under sin; neither is it necessary to make use of the said formula, since, in order to share in the said Indulgences, no more is required than a hearty act of our will.

The principle on which this Heroic Act mainly rests is clearly laid down by Father Mumford in his sixth and eighth chapters. In the latter he says[1] that the help afforded by us to the suffering souls "is an act so highly meritorious of grace and glory, an act so impetratory of such things as may be eternally beneficial to our own souls, that the loss of the fruit of our satisfactions is nothing to be valued in regard of the gain which we purchase."

And again, in the tenth chapter,[2] when replying to the objection that to give away to others what would be accepted by God in the stead of the debt of our own temporal punishment is against well-ordered charity, he says, "Though we did become liable to these and greater pains, yet they were not so much to be esteemed as a flea-bite for gaining of a kingdom, if by this our charity towards the souls we might increase (as we do most highly increase) the crown of our eternal glory."

And once more: "It is nothing against well-ordered charity towards ourselves to help these souls as much as we can; but it needs must be against perfection of this charity not to assist them to our full power, for that we lose the merit of so rare a charity, and the loss of this merit is a loss of the more perfect sight of God for ever. What a

[1] P. 44. [2] P. 54.

loss is this, dear brother—what a loss is this! Remember what we said out of St. Thomas,[1] 'That our essential bliss' (which consists in the fruition of God, of which we are made more abundantly partaker by having exercised more abundant charity to our neighbour) 'is infinitely better than the forgiveness of temporal pain;' which, notwithstanding, is the chiefest good, which those niggards aim at who pretend so much charity to themselves. They understand not that true charity to themselves consists in the real desiring, and effectually procuring, their own good. Those do not do this, who, fixing their eyes only upon that temporal good which consists in purchasing forgiveness of the temporal pain due to their sins, omit to procure that which 'is infinitely better than this forgiveness'—that is, they omit to purchase a more eminent degree in fruition of essential beatitude, by being made partakers of which they might have known, honoured, loved, and enjoyed God for a whole eternity, in a far more perfect manner than now they shall. A good, so far surpassing the forgiveness of all temporal pain in Purgatory, that there is not one of the Saints in Heaven who would not willingly undergo the temporal pains of a thousand Purgatories, if, by the undergoing of them, he might notably increase his essential glory in beatifical vision and fruition; as we may do, exercising these most meritorious acts of charity in relieving the souls in Purgatory, which, how much they conduce to our advancement in essential

[1] Chap. vi. n. 3.

beatitude, hath been largely declared in the sixth and seventh chapters."

On the other hand, the positions by which Father Mumford supports the title of his eighth chapter, "that by offering our actions for the souls in Purgatory, we do not less but more satisfy for our own sins," are clearly inapplicable to the Heroic Act.

The first is that "this loss may fully be repaired by the gaining of Indulgences for ourselves." But the fervent charity of the faithful, that since Father Mumford's time has found expression in the Heroic Act, includes in its offering all the rich treasures of Indulgences gained; and thus it is that the Popes have rendered applicable to the souls in Purgatory all Indulgences which are gained by the faithful who have made this offering, even though they are not applicable to the dead when gained by others.

Father Mumford further maintains, and most truly, that the devotion of offering our satisfactions for the holy souls "is a rare kind of satisfaction." He affirms that the act of giving away, "with so great charity to God and our neighbour," that which might have been offered in satisfaction for our own sins, is in itself an act of such merit that by it we "do both satisfy for our sins, and satisfy in no mean manner, but in a manner far more excellent than is ordinarily conceived."[1] Thus those who give their satisfactions to the souls in Purgatory "are so far from depriving themselves of all satisfaction that, as often as they give their

[1] P. 45.

satisfactory works away, they heap up great treasures of satisfaction,"[1] and so "may have justly great hopes of avoiding all, or a very great part, of their Purgatory pains;" and again, "the forgiveness of temporal pains in Purgatory . . . may be purchased by this devotion."[2]

The whole of Father Mumford's argument is perfectly good. It is true that the charity of giving away what we might retain has great merit, and that every meritorious work is also satisfactory; but the argument is inapplicable to the indulgenced devotion of the Heroic Act, for the pious ingenuity of a self-sacrificing charity has perceived that this very satisfaction might be offered also in behalf of others, as well as all else that might avail in mitigation of our own debt of temporal punishment.

The Heroic Act of Charity is in fact an offer to God, through our Blessed Lady's hands, to bear in our own person the debts due to His justice in Purgatory, when our time shall come: and a prayer that He may be pleased to accept all that might in any way have mitigated our pains, in behalf of those holy souls whom the Blessed Virgin shall choose for that benefit. Such is the act of devotion that is fitly called heroic; and lest any should be alarmed and lose courage at the prospect of the cost to themselves involved in the very heroism of this devotion, it may be well to set down here in short the advantages that will abundantly repay that cost.

We need not fear that the contemplation of those advantages will lessen the disinterestedness,

[1] P. 48. [2] P. 56.

and therefore the heroism. The prospect of reward is God's own method of encouragement. The more disinterested and the more heroic a good work is, the greater is the reward that awaits it. A martyr, in the most heroic of all heroic acts, while giving his life for God, is told to look for the crown of life that is promised to those who shall be faithful unto death.[1] *Noli oblivisci omnes retributiones ejus*—"Forget not all His rewards," is the counsel of the Psalmist, whose own heart was inclined to God's justifications for ever, "for the reward."[2] And our Divine Redeemer Himself, the King of Martyrs and the example of all heroism, *proposito sibi gaudio*—"having joy proposed unto Him, underwent the Cross, despising the shame."[3] The truth is, that the very contemplation of the reward, the prospect of the exceeding great benefit to ourselves in return for so little, at least, little in comparison, is the way to a clearer knowledge of the goodness of our Heavenly Father, and is thus the incentive of the saints to the acquisition of the pure and entirely disinterested love of God.

The first advantage of the Heroic Act is thus excellently summed up by St. Thomas: "Essential reward is infinitely better than the forgiveness of temporal pain." No degree of temporal punishment, however great and however long, can be put into comparison with an increase of eternal glory. For the Heroic Act the reward is infinitely greater than the cost. The difference is infinite; for while

[1] Apoc. ii. 10. [2] Psalm cii. 2; cxviii. 112.
[3] Hebrews xii. 2.

temporal punishment, however severe, is finite in intensity and finite in duration, the reward in glory is the possession in a greater degree of the infinite God, and that for an eternity. Such an increased degree of glory constitutes a new Heaven. Had that one meritorious action been the only one to be rewarded, it would have received from the justice of God a Heaven for its reward, the eternal possession of God in a degree proportioned to its merit. If the offer were made to any one of an increased degree of glory, that is, of a greater knowledge of God, and a greater love of God for all eternity, at the price of any degree of temporal suffering, it would be a suicidal act of cowardice not to accept the offer. This is the very essence of the Heroic Act. It is an exchange of satisfaction for merit, of Purgatory for Heaven, of time for eternity, of pain for glory and for God.

The second advantage consists in this, that it is heroic. It is undoubtedly a great offering to make, an act of charity involving one of the greatest sacrifices that we are capable of offering to God. Our debt, as it is now due, and, alas! the further debt that we may be so unhappy as to contract during all the remainder of our lives, we deliberately take upon ourselves to pay "to the last farthing."[1] The pain of sense assigned by the Divine Justice as the due equivalent of our sinful turning to creatures, and the delay of the Beatific Vision, with the indescribable pain of the loving yearning of the waiting soul, we must look forward to; and we do not

[1] St. Matt. v. 26.

appropriate to ourselves the treasures within our reach, by which that pain may be mitigated, and that term of waiting shortened. Surely such an Act deserves the name of Heroic, which the Church has sanctioned. Now there are very few acts of our lives that deserve so to be called. Can we afford to throw away the opportunity of performing one? To do one for the love of God may obtain for us the great grace of another: perhaps of *one* other, during our lives; and what a difference one heroic act would make to our place in Heaven!

Every habit must commence by single acts. Habitual heroism is the life of a saint. This one act may be the commencement of a chain of graces strengthening us to perform heroic acts that may constitute saintliness. And this Heroic Act for the souls in Purgatory is the very one for a soul "zealous for the better gifts,"[1] yet fearful of its own weakness; for, when the time shall come for the pain to be borne, the dispositions cannot possibly fail. There can be no murmurings, no repinings or regrets in the sinless land of Purgatory, no want of conformity with the Divine will, no impatience or want of courage, nothing but a brave joy that God's glory was advanced and that redeemed souls had entered the sooner into the possession of God.

The third advantage is, that it is not only an Heroic Act, but an Heroic Act of Charity. "Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life," his soul—*animam suam*—"for his friends."[2]

[1] 1 Cor. xii. 31. [2] St. John xv. 13.

"In this we have known the charity of God, because He hath laid down His life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."[1] Our Lord has come to introduce the law of vicarious suffering. "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so shall you fulfil the law of Christ."[2] Those, therefore, who are pressed by the charity of Christ[3] will rejoice in an act of charity, by the heroic self-denial and sacrifice of which, "seeking not her own,"[4] they are conformed to the image of the perfect Charity that "was wounded for our iniquities and was bruised for our sins."[5]

And this particular act of charity bears a close resemblance to one of the noblest that it has entered into the heart of a Saint to conceive. St. Ignatius was willing, if thereby he might do good to the souls of others, to remain in this world, with all its uncertainty of final salvation, rather than die at once and be certain that he was saved. This falls little short of the glorious exaggeration of the charity of the Apostle, who "wished to be an anathema from Christ"[6] for his brethren. To the delay of the Beatific Vision, which is the hard part of the sacrifice of the Heroic Act, St. Ignatius would have added in his charity that uncertainty of eternal salvation which the Heroic Act not only does not create, but diminishes.

The fourth advantage of the Heroic Act is that it is a service rendered to God, and so makes those who perform it pleasing to Him. Propitiation is

[1] 1 St. John iii. 16. [2] Galat. vi. 2. [3] 2 Cor. v. 14.
[4] 1 Cor. xiii. 5. [5] Isaias liii. 5. [6] Romans ix. 3.

one of the ends of sacrifice. The sacrifice of charity in behalf of the holy souls in Purgatory cannot fail to render God propitious; that is, it will induce Him to look down on us and treat us with favour, in a degree that we should not otherwise have deserved or obtained. He has been pleased to leave largely to us the exercise of His royal prerogative of mercy in behalf of the poor prisoners of His justice. We can move Him by our prayers, and we can offer to Him some little in compensation for those who can do nothing for themselves but suffer. But He is willing to be moved. It is pleasing to Him to be entreated to use His proper attribute of mercy, for He is God, *Cui proprium est misereri semper et parcere*—"Whose property it is ever to have mercy and to spare." But mercy belongs to the time of probation only, and, were it not for the Communion of Saints, in which the dead yet live in their fellow-members of the Body of Christ, after death there would be no forgiveness. Purgatory would not end until the debt was fully paid. Its sufferings are what divines call satispassion, and not satisfaction. It is, therefore, most pleasing to God when, by our use of the free-will He has entrusted to us in this time of our probation, we move Him to have mercy and to forgive.

And He is especially served in the manner that pleases Him when, through our means, His creatures are brought to the end for which He made them. When one of the holy souls enters Heaven, the end of its creation is accomplished. It sees and enjoys that God, to know and to possess Whom it was

made. And this we are hastening when, by the Heroic Act, we help the waiting souls to exchange their Purgatory for the Paradise of God. We offer all by way of suffrage, even holy Indulgences from the great treasury of the satisfactions of Christ and His Saints; but the suffrages are offered to a most loving Creator and Father, and cause Him to look with increased tenderness on those who offer them.

The fifth advantage is the joy thereby given to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. To help the holy souls is to co-operate with Him in the dear work of their redemption. If in the Agony in the Garden the bitterest drop in His chalice must have been the neglect of the graces of His Passion, the greatest consolation we can offer to His Sacred Heart is that His merits should be applied to the end for which He offered them. That we have any satisfactions to offer comes from Him. They are really His, while they are ours. All their efficacy, all their value, is from their union with Him. From Him is the sanctifying grace, the actual grace; from Him the desire to promote God's glory and the good of souls; from Him the meritorious actions which satisfy God's justice; by Him were the treasures gathered together from which Indulgences are drawn, and from Him is the power of the Keys by which they are dispensed; from Him the charity that others may show us after our death and the Masses that may be offered on our behalf; from Him the act of charity by which they are all freely given away.

And then, the holy souls to whom they are given are His dear spouses, who have been faithful to Him

through the last conflict, and who are the precious fruit of His painful Passion. Those who help these dear souls touch the Sacred Heart of our Lord, and move Him to a tender and almighty gratitude, for, in behalf of the souls that He loved more dearly than His life, they "fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ,"[1] those things that He has purposely left for His members to bear with Him.

The sixth advantage is the patronage of Mary. The Heroic Act is made into her hands, and by it our heavenly treasures are placed at her disposal. What offering could be more grateful to our Blessed Mother, whose children are suffering? It would be hard for us to find any means by which we can ensure for ourselves more certainly our Mother's interest and watchful care. The more meritorious actions we perform, the more satisfactions our Blessed Lady has at her disposal. That our good actions should be more frequent and more fervent is her gain. What Divine inspirations and impulses, what providential opportunities, what courage, what success, what perseverance, will be the fruit of our well-placed confidence in Mary? The Blessed Virgin made saints of those to whom she confided the work of the ransom of captives which we commemorate under the title of Our Lady of Mercy, encouraging them to bind themselves by vow to give themselves into captivity in order to procure the liberation of those who were in bondage: and most assuredly she will not forget the needs, or be slow to hear the prayers, of those who willingly

[1] Coloss. i. 24.

undergo imprisonment for the spiritual ransom and redemption of souls.

We need not fear, because we are losing the control over our satisfactions and Indulgences, that we cannot help whom we please, however dear they may be to us, for it is not to the hands of a stranger that we entrust them. It is our Mother to whom we give them, who loves those whom we love, and who will be the more ready to help them for our sakes when we appeal to her generosity on their behalf. We do not give away our power of praying, and we satisfy all the claims of kindred or friendship upon us by the strengthened power of our prayer. For, not only when the souls of others are recommended to her intercession, but in any prayer, to whom should she turn a willing ear, if not to those who have entrusted to her all in their power, for distribution at her good pleasure?

The seventh advantage is the happiness of the holy Angels. From their entrance into Heaven a throne in their midst has been vacant, and it is filled as a soul comes forth from Purgatory. There is joy among them all: but we can figure to ourselves in particular the contentment of the Archangel St. Michael, "the prince—*super omnes animas suscipiendas*—over all the souls that are received;" and the happiness of the Guardian Angel, who has waited so patiently through life and has watched so lovingly at the gates of Purgatory, and who can now joyfully present before God the object of all that waiting and watching. As a mother would prize a benefit conferred on the

weakest and most helpless of her children, on whom she has poured out the rich stores of her love, so, and much more, will an Angel Guardian value all that is done on behalf of his helpless charge.

The eighth advantage is in the friendship of the Saints. As the pains of Hell are all the more grievous for each additional soul that enters in there, so Heaven is the happier for each accession to the number of its blessed inhabitants. Every Saint in Heaven is rejoiced at the entrance of a soul to share his happiness. The Saints are thus indebted to those who hasten the admission into glory of their friends and future companions; and who shall measure the advantage to be derived from the gratitude of the Saints who reign with Christ?

The ninth advantage is from the gratitude of the souls that have been succoured by us. Let us imagine a soul in Heaven, conscious, in the fulness of its enjoyment of God, that the day of its entrance into the possession of its heavenly inheritance has been anticipated on our account. It owes to us the Beatific Vision, for the time which would otherwise have been spent in longing desires. Now, in that vision of God it sees our wants; now, in its fresh-found union with God, its prayers have an efficacy which they have not known before. We can thus secure to ourselves an advocate before the throne of God during the dangers of life and death, until all shall be safe, and our congratulations mingle with our thanksgivings in Heaven: mutual benefactors and mutually benefited rejoicing together.

The tenth advantage accrues to ourselves from the consciousness of the offering that we have made of our satisfactions and of all that might diminish our personal debt of punishment. Our attention will thus be drawn to the consequences of venial sin, and we shall be induced more earnestly than ever to shrink with great tenderness of conscience from all that could add to the debt we have already incurred.

It will be seen that by the Heroic Act we are far indeed from giving up everything. Sacrifice has its four ends, and every good action has in some degree the nature of a sacrifice. Now, of these four fruits we give up one and only one. We give up satisfaction, which corresponds to punishment and to nothing else. But the adoration and service of God we perform in a manner more to His glory. Personal merit we could not part with if we would, for every man shall be judged according to his works,[1] and merit is the measure of the reward that each one shall receive at the hands of the all-just Judge. An increase of merit means an increase of grace here, and an increase of glory hereafter; and this, and not any loss, is the fruit of the Heroic Act. Propitiation is strengthened by it; and our power of impetration, for not only our power of praying for whom we will, but of applying to any intention the impetratory power of our good works, is not included in it. It is expressly declared that a priest's power of offering the Holy Sacrifice for whom he wills, is not surrendered by it, but that

[1] St. Matt. xvi. 27; Romans ii. 6.

what he gives is the satisfactory part of that special fruit of the Mass that belongs to himself.

To all these manifest advantages we may add the great spiritual concessions of the Church, which are of a character to show the judgment entertained by the Holy See of this devotion. The Indult of a Privileged Altar for a certain number of days in each week is a grant not unfrequently made to priests by the Pope in answer to personal application, and it is a favour deservedly prized. All priests who have made the Heroic Act have thereby this personal privilege conferred on them, extended to every day in the year; that is to say, by every Mass said for the Faithful Departed the Pope applies, by the power of the Keys, an Indulgence sufficient, if God should be pleased so to accept it, for the liberation of a soul from Purgatory. Lay persons who have made the Heroic Act have, in addition to all the other Indulgences within their reach, this further one, of a Plenary Indulgence for the benefit of the Holy Souls at every Communion they make. Then, even without Holy Communion, there is the very rare concession of a Plenary Indulgence for hearing Mass in suffrage for the Holy Souls, on Monday if possible; but if the Mass cannot be heard on that day, then the Indulgence is granted for assisting at Mass on Sunday. The only other condition for these Indulgences is some prayer for the Pope's intention in a church or public oratory. And lastly, as has already been noticed, all Indulgences granted hitherto, or to be granted in the future, though ordinarily not applicable to the

dead, are made available by the Pope for the pious ends of this highly favoured devotion.

The terms of the concession call for one further remark. It pleased the paternal heart of our Holy Father Pius IX. to think of children who have not yet made their first Communion, of the poor sick, of those afflicted with chronic disorders, of the aged, of farm-labourers, and of prisoners, and compassionately to grant, by a decree expressly issued in their behalf, that Bishops may empower confessors to commute the condition of Holy Communion into some other pious work. Those who are timid, and afraid to make this heroic offering, may thus see for whom the Pope thought it necessary to make provision, as amongst those whom he contemplated as likely to avail themselves of this means of increasing their merit and helping others.

And to facilitate the devotion we are taught that no form of words is necessary, and that "nothing more is required than a hearty act of our will." In words then, brief as an ejaculation, we may make the Heroic Act. "Dear Lord, I make the offering of all I can give to the Holy Souls, through the hands of Thy Blessed Mother." And not less briefly it can be renewed day by day. No doubt it does not need renewal, but we shall feel the benefit ourselves if we renew it constantly. It will keep alive within us a tender charity for the Holy Souls, and a desire to increase the worth of our offering by the fervour of our lives, for it is by a frequent repetition of acts that our will acquires both force and fervour.

PURGATORY SURVEYED.

THE FIRST SURVEY.

PURGATORY IS LAID OPEN, WITH ALL THE HELLISH PAINS WITH WHICH THE SOULS ARE TORMENTED.

For fear lest my discourses, dear reader, should not prove so lucky as to raise up your compassion, nor my words so prevalent as to make a breach or deep impression in thy heart, which is the main thing I aim at in this whole treatise, I am resolved to have recourse to that pious stratagem which the first Jesuits so happily made use of in the conversion of the Indies. Those good Fathers were not, at first, well skilled in the language of the New World; and yet their zeal would be still carrying them on to preach, whilst the Indians stood listening and staring at them, but could understand little or nothing. This would not have done their work, had they not withal used this device, to take with them into the pulpit certain devout pictures which they had carried out of Europe, in which the Passion of our Blessed Saviour was very lively represented. Here they first showed the most bitter torments which the Son of God endured for their sakes; and then they laboured to express, in their best Indian phrase, the name of God, Saviour of the world, most holy Prophet, and the like; pointing

still at the picture, to tell them that He Whom they saw so cruelly misused was the very Man they spake of. And this they followed with showers of tears; preaching Christ's Passion more with their eyes than their tongues, and setting forth their discourses with sighs and sobs and a mournful voice, in lieu of other tropes and metaphors. Who would believe it? The barbarians, at the sight of so lamentable a spectacle, out of a natural compassion, seconded by an interior impulse of Divine grace, burst forth into fountains of tears, and became strangely concerned for that poor Patient, Whom they beheld only in effigy. The heart has this property, that it understands the language of hearts, let the expressions of the tongue be never so imperfect; and the eyes are of that sympathetic nature, that when eyes speak to them in floods of tears, in lieu of full periods, they instantly melt also into tears, and so mingle their griefs with a strange kind of sympathy and near alliance. What the tongue cannot utter, the eye speaks aloud; and the heart, and the very air of the whole countenance, of a man who seems to carry his very heart on his brow. Seeing, therefore, my discourses may fall short of what I design, I am now going about to lay Purgatory open: to represent, I say, unto your view, as in a map or picture, that bloody tragedy which is acted there, not in sport and merriment, alas! but with horror and amazement. And if you dare not with the eye of faith contemplate this sad and horrid spectacle in itself, at least refuse not to look upon this picture, which I am now going to delineate, to give you a

rude draught of the just rigour of Almighty God in purging holy souls, and, as it were, distilling them by drops in a fiery limbeck.

§ 1.—*Of the fire of Purgatory, and pain of sense.*

It was a strange piece of niceness,[1] that of the Grecians in the Council of Florence, to boggle at the smoke and fire of Purgatory, and yet withal to confess it to be a dark and dreadful dungeon, an abyss of utter grief and torments; as if they would have been content all other engines of cruelty should have place there, to play the executioners, so they might but have leave to banish fire from having anything to do in the purgation of souls. The Latin Fathers laboured to undeceive them in this point of folly, and sore gravelled them with that text of the Apostle: "He shall be saved, yet so as by fire:"[2] which cannot be meant of hell-fire, as the Grecians understood it, because no salvation or redemption is to be expected there; but may well be meant of the fire of Purgatory, which is designed only for the purifying of saved souls. And though they thought fit afterwards to waive that controversy for peace' sake, and not to press on to a definition, yet is it a doctrine very generally received and taught by the holy Fathers and Doctors of the Catholic Church, and very consonant to the dictates of the Holy Ghost in Divine Scriptures, that there is a real and corporeal fire in Purgatory; and that the souls which depart this life, without first cancelling their

[1] *i.e.* An over-subtle and inconsistent distinction.
[2] 1 Cor. iii. 15.

many failings and imperfections by satisfactory works, are necessarily plunged into merciless flames, which, by little and little, eat away all that dross and impurity which, till expiated, obstructs their entrance into Heaven. Nor is it possible, to my thinking, to raise any argument of substance[1] to discredit these purging flames, which will not also be levelled at the extinguishing of hell-fire: which, notwithstanding, Holy Writ assures us to be "prepared for the devil and his angels."[2] I am sure St. Augustine[3] finds the same difficulty, how the devils' and men's souls can be tormented with fire: and gives the same solution to both, with a "Why should we not say that incorporeal spirits may be truly tormented with corporeal fire, though after a strange and wonderful manner?" Must we presently renounce the oracles of God's Church, because we cannot fathom them with our narrow capacity? The very foundations of our faith would be shrewdly[4] shaken, should we measure them by this preposterous rule, of a seeming demonstration to the contrary. Believe it, it is one of the first rudiments, but main principles, of a Christian, to captivate his understanding, and so regulate all his dictamens, that they be sure to run parallel with the sentiments of the Church. And this I take to be the case when the question is started about Purgatory fire, which

[1] *i.e.* Any valid argument.

[2] St. Matt. xxv. 41.

[3] *De Civit.* xxi. 10. "Veris, sed miris modis."

[4] The word is applied in old English as meaning *greatly* or *forcibly*, but in an unfavourable sense, implying pain, grievousness, contention, &c.

I shall ever reckon in the class of those truths which cannot be contradicted without manifest temerity, as being the doctrine generally preached and taught all over Christendom.

You must, then, conceive Purgatory to be a vast, darksome, and hideous chaos, full of fire and flames, in which the souls are kept close prisoners until they have fully satisfied for all their misdemeanours, according to the estimate of Divine justice. For God has made choice of this element of fire wherewith to punish souls, because it is the most active, piercing, sensible,[1] and insupportable of all others. But that which quickens it indeed, and gives it more life, is this: that it acts as the instrument of God's justice, Who, by His omnipotent power, heightens and reinforces its activity as He pleases, and so makes it capable to act upon bodiless spirits. Do not then look only upon this fire, though in good earnest it be dreadful enough of itself; but consider the arm that is stretched out, and the hand that strikes, and the rigour of God's infinite justice, Who, through this element of fire, vents His wrath, and pours out whole tempests of His most severe and yet most just vengeance. So that the fire works as much mischief, as I may say,[2] to the souls, as God commands; and He commands as much as is due; and as much is due as the sentence bears: a sentence irrevocably pronounced at the high tribunal of the severe and rigorous justice of an

[1] *i.e.* Apprehended by the senses.

[2] *i.e.* Not implying injury, far less injustice; but simply punishment and suffering.

angry God, and Whose anger is so prevalent that the Holy Scripture styles it "a day of fury."[1] Now you will easily believe that this fire is a most horrible punishment in its own nature; but you may do well to reflect also on that which I have now suggested, that the fury of Almighty God is, as it were, the fire of this fire, and the heat of its heat; and that He serves Himself of it as He pleases, by doubling and redoubling its sharp pointed forces; for this is that which makes it the more grievous and insupportable to the souls that are thus miserably confined and imprisoned.

They were not much out of the way, that styled Purgatory a transitory kind of Hell, because the principal pains of the damned are to be found there; with this only difference, that in Hell they are eternal, and in Purgatory they are only transitory and fleeting: for otherwise[2] it is probably the very same fire which burns both the holy souls and the damned spirits;[3] and the pain of loss is, in both places, the chief torment, as I shall declare hereafter. Now, does not your hair stand on end? Does not your heart tremble, when you hear that the poor souls in Purgatory are tormented with the same or the like flames to those of the damned? Can you refrain from crying out, with the Prophet Isaias: "Who can dwell with such devouring fire, and unquenchable burnings?"[4] Heavens! what a

[1] Job xx. 28; Isaias xiii. 13; Lament. i. 12.
[2] *i.e.* As to the other particulars.
[3] Suarez, d. 45, sec. 2, n. 4; St. Thomas in 4. d. 21. q. 1.
[4] Isaias xxxiii. 14.

lamentable case is this! Those miserable souls who of late, when they were wedded to their bodies, were so nice and dainty, forsooth, that they durst scarce venture to enjoy the comfortable heat of a fire, but under the protection of their screens and their fans, for fear of sullying their complexions, and if by chance a spark had been so rude as to light upon them, or a little smoke, it was not to be endured; those for whom down itself was too hard, and even ready to break their bones, one single grain of misfortune, a stone but as big as a nut, a rotten tooth, a sullen and malignant humour stolen into the marrow of a bone, a cross word, an affront, an idle fancy, a mere dream, was enough to bury their whole felicity in a kind of hell—alas! how will it fare with them, when they shall see themselves tied to unmerciful firebrands, or embodied, as it were, with flames of fire, surrounded with frightful darkness, broiled and consumed without intermission, and perhaps condemned to the same fire with which the devils are unspeakably tormented? When Saul found himself beset on all sides, and in the midst of his enemies, and saw that he must either die instantly, or fall into the hands of that base and accursed crew: Oh, let me rather die, cried he;[1] he will do me a favour that will cut my throat, that so I may not see myself butchered by such wicked hands, and trailed away by them; death is not the thing I apprehend, but that, a king as I am, I should die like a slave! ah, it is that which gives me the fatal blow, and breaks

[1] 1 Kings xxxi. 4.

my very heart. O God! what a confusion, what a sensible heart-breaking will it be to those noble and generous souls, designed to eternal glory in the Kingdom of Heaven, when they shall see themselves condemned to the same punishment, and devoured by the same implacable flames with those of the damned, and lodged in the very suburbs of Hell. A prince had rather die a thousand deaths than be condemned to live amongst base slaves in a galley, or to be hanged amongst felons: for it is not the death so much as the dishonour that makes them to die indeed. And can you doubt whether the souls of the just have the same feelings when they see themselves involved in the same misfortune, in the same place, and in the same flames of fire with which the accursed rabble of damned spirits is eternally tormented? Ah! they take it for so high a dishonour, that it may with reason be questioned whether this unhappy place and condition grieves them not more than the fire itself. Once[1] on a time they would have forced a young Roman cavalier into the bottom of a dark and stinking pit; but his heart was so filled with indignation at it, that he chose rather to dash out his brains against a door-threshold, and so to let out his blood and his life together, than to enter into so noisome a place. What a tearing grief must it be to those virtuous souls, when they shall see themselves border upon the very confines of Hell, and in that accursed frontier; and more than this, to be shut up close prisoners in that unhappy gulf; and to be con-

[1] Plutarch, *Sen.*

demned to suffer the same fire as the damned, though their punishment be neither so terrible nor so lasting.

Good God! how the great Saints and Doctors astonish me, when they treat of this fire, and of the pain of sense, as they call it. For they peremptorily pronounce that the fire that purges those souls, those both happy and unhappy souls, surpasses all the torments which are to be found in this miserable life of man, or are possible to be invented; for so far they go. Out of which assertion it clearly follows, that the furious fits of the stone, fever, or raging gout, the tormenting colic, with all the horrible convulsions of the worst of diseases, nay, though you join racks, gridirons, boiling oils, wild beasts, and a hundred horses drawing several ways and tearing one limb from another, with all the other hellish devices of the most barbarous and cruel tyrants, all this does not reach to the least part of the mildest pains in Purgatory. For thus they discourse: the fire and the pains of the other world are of another nature from those of this life; because God elevates them above their nature to be instruments of His severity. Now, say they, things of an inferior degree can never reach to the power of such things as are of a higher rank: for example, the air, let it be ever so inflamed, unless it be converted into fire, can never be so hot as fire. Besides, God bridles His rigour in this world; but in the next, He lets the reins loose, and punishes almost equally to the desert. And, since those souls have preferred creatures before their Creator, He

seems to be put upon a necessity of punishing them beyond the ordinary strength of creatures; and hence it is that the fire of Purgatory burns more, torments and afflicts more, than all the creatures of this life are able to do. But is it really true, that the least pain in Purgatory exceeds the greatest here on earth? O God! the very statement makes me tremble for fear, and my very heart freezes into ice with astonishment. And yet, who dare oppose St. Augustine, St. Thomas, St. Anselm, St. Gregory the Great?[1] Is there any hope of carrying the negative assertion against such a stream of Doctors, who all maintain the affirmative, and bring so strong reasons for it? Have patience to hear them once more. Sin, say they, exceeds all creatures in malice, and therefore, let it be never so little, it must deserve a punishment exceeding all the pain that can proceed from creatures. Again: Creatures here below do nothing above their natural reach and capacity; they act only within the sphere of their limited forces; whereas, the fire that is designed to purify guilty souls, derives its vigour and force from God, Who, being Almighty, and besides, provoked to displeasure, makes it so active and so forcible, that there is nothing that can be compared with it. And they add unto all this a world of visions and revelations, which seem to countenance the rigour of their statement. What then will become of thee, poor idle soul, if the least pains in

[1] St. Augustine in Psalm xxxvii.; St. Thomas, Suppl. q. 100. a. 3. et in 4. d. 21; St. Gregory, in Psalm iii. Penitent.; St. Anselm, in *Elucidario*.

Purgatory surpass the greatest in this world? what, I say, will become of thee, that art so tender, that a little smoke is able to draw tears from thy eyes?

But, for thy comfort, there are Doctors in the Catholic Church that cannot agree with so much severity: and, namely, St. Bonaventure, who is very peremptory in denying it.[1] For what way is there, says this holy Doctor, to verify so great a paradox, without wounding reason and destroying the infinite mercy of God? I am easily persuaded there are torments in Purgatory far exceeding any in this mortal life; this is most certain, and it is but reasonable it should be so: but that the least there should be more terrible than the most terrible in the world, cannot enter into my belief. May it not often fall out, that a man comes to die in a most eminent state of perfection; save only, that in his last agony, out of mere frailty, he commits a venial sin, or carries along with him some relic of his former failings, which might have been easily blotted out with a *Pater noster*, or washed away with a little *holy water:* for I am supposing it to be some very small matter. Now what likelihood is there, I will not say that the infinite mercy of God, but that the very rigour of His justice, though you conceive it to be ever so severe, should inflict so horrible a punishment upon this holy soul, as not to be equalled by the greatest torments in this life; and all this for some petty fault, scarce worth the speaking of? How! would you have God, for a kind of trifle, to punish a soul full of grace and

[1] St. Bonaventure, in 4, d. 20.

virtue, and so severely to punish her, as to exceed all the racks, cauldrons, furnaces, and other hellish inventions which are scarce inflicted upon the most execrable criminals in the world? What do you make God to be? Is He not a God of mercy in the other world as well as in this? He that is so sweet and so good, says Tertullian,[1] that He darts the rays of His mercies into the darkest abyss of Hell, shall He be so extremely rigorous in Purgatory, which is so full of saints? That which a sigh would have blown away here, or a tear have drowned, as being so small a matter, will you have God pour out His whole wrath for it, and to punish it with such a proportion of sufferings as cannot be paralleled by all the torments in this world? Have a care lest, by making God too severe, you say that which clashes with His infinite mercy. That nothing should remain unpunished, is no more than fitting; but that for a mere peccadillo, or for some small remnant of a little penance, God should employ such tortures, is a most incredible paradox, and St. Bonaventure will not believe it; and are we not beholden to him for it? He confesses that the fire, the worm, and all the purging pain, is of its nature far greater than the pains of this world; but that the least there should surpass the greatest here, he flatly denies; and I cannot think thou wilt need much entreaty to side with him. And thus much learned Suarez[2] has prudently observed for thy purpose: that in truth, the pains of Purgatory and those of this life are of quite different kinds, and

[1] Tertullian, *Apolog.* [2] Suarez, d. 40, 3, 4.

can no more be compared together than a flint with a diamond; but that there may be so many flints put together as to exceed the worth of a diamond: and so may the pains of this life be so multiplied as to surmount the least of those in Purgatory.

§ 2.—*Of the worm, and pain of loss.*

But why do I entertain you so long with the consideration of the fire and flames of Purgatory, as if it were the only or the greatest torment of the afflicted souls? Alas, there is a worm which gnaws them yet more to the quick than those murdering flames, which make but an outward assault. It is this worm, alas, it is this worm that plays the tyrant over those captive souls. The worm of Hell shall never die:[1] while that of Purgatory shall die, indeed, but so long as it lives it is not to be imagined how cruelly it bites. I know there are those among the learned that believe God has in store certain ravenous and devouring worms, that shall incessantly prey upon the carcasses of the damned souls, and cause an endless martyrdom by consuming them without ever yet consuming them. But as for Purgatory, where there are only mere souls, stripped of their bodies, there are no corporeal worms; but the worm that gnaws them is a metaphorical worm, or a sharp and sensible grief and deep resentment,[2] which utterly undoes those miserable souls by piercing and transpiercing them

[1] Isaias lxvi. 24; St. Mark ix. 45.

[2] *i.e.* A continued feeling of pain for something that has taken place.

with the sharp lances of a thousand and a thousand remorses.

But to give you, in fine, a more particular description of this insatiable and devouring worm, which causes them so much mischief and vexation: divines teach us that it is either an heroical act of charity, or a vigorous act of contrition, or, finally, a holy kind of impatience and supernatural act of hope; but such a one as does so importunely and powerfully chastise them, that it is not to be expressed. You may fancy charity to be a golden file, which goes filing and still filing away the dross of their imperfections, and as it were consuming them without intermission; contrition to be a pair of hot, biting pincers, which doth so desperately pinch those poor souls that it is a kind of pity to God and His angels to behold it; hope retarded to be a kind of rack, upon which those miserable souls are so far extended and stretched out with a desire that carries them to God, and so withheld by the impediment that lies in themselves, that it must needs be an unmerciful torment. They seem, as it were, to be drawn in pieces by wild horses. Love draws, but pain withdraws; contrition spurs them on, but their misfortune pulls them back; hope gives them wings, but justice clips them off; and, through the violence of these contrary motions, these unfortunate souls are in a most lamentable condition, and, as the Holy Scripture expresses it, are gnawn and torn in pieces with hungry, devouring, and tormenting worms. It is not the fire, nor all the brimstone and tortures they endure, which murders them

alive. No, no; it is the domestical cause of all these mischiefs that racks their consciences and is their cruellest executioner. This, this is the greatest of their evils; for a soul that has shaken off the fetters of flesh and blood, and is full of the love of God, no more disordered with unruly passions, nor blinded with the night of ignorance, sees clearly the vast injury she has done herself to have offended so good a God, and to have deserved to be thus banished out of His sight and deprived of that Divine fruition. She sees how easily she might have flown up straight to Heaven at her first parting with her body, and what a trifle it was that impeded her. A moment lost, of those inebriating joys, seems to her now worthy to be redeemed with an eternity of pains. Then, reflecting with herself that she was created only for God, and cannot be truly satisfied but by enjoying God, and that out of Him all this goodly machine of the world is no better than a direct Hell, and an abyss of evils: alas! what worms, what martyrdoms, and what nipping pincers, are such pinching thoughts as these? The fire is to her but as smoke, in comparison of this vexing remembrance of her own follies, which betrayed her to this disgraceful and unavoidable misfortune. There was a king who in a humour[1] gave away his crown and his whole estate for the present refreshment of a cup of cold water; but, returning a little to himself, and soberly reflecting what he had done, had like to have run stark mad, to see the strange, irreparable folly he had committed. To lose a year,

[1] *i.e.* In a momentary fancy.

or two years (to say no more), the beatifical vision, for a glass of water, for a handful of earth, for the love of a fading beauty, for a little air of worldly praise, a mere puff of honour; ah! it is the hell of Purgatory to a soul that truly loves God, and frames a right conceit of things. Jephte[1] could have died for grief, when he saw that by his rashness he was to lose his only daughter, the light of his eyes, the life of his soul, and soul of his life. And that poor youth from whom they had stolen his gods, although they were mere idols, yet did he take on most bitterly, and became so disconsolate, there was no chiding him out of that humour. "What!" said he, "have you robbed me of my gods, and do you now question me, why I lament?" As if he had not cause enough to grieve, who has lost his gods. And you may observe, it was not his fault that they were lost; and besides, they were but gods of wood and stone, such as a skilful artist would have made far better. The case here is different; for the souls clearly see they have lost God through their own carelessness; and lost Him for ten, twenty, or perhaps thirty years, and this puts them out of the reach of all comfort. Here below, indeed, we are not able to taste the bitterness of this wormwood; but those pure souls, who are in the grace of God, and full of light, and well-grounded discourses, see so clearly the grossness and foulness of this error, and taste so sensibly the gall and bitterness thereof, that it is a more vexing pain to them than that of the fire.

[1] Judges xi. and xviii.

But you will say: It is but for a short time that they are to be kept out of Paradise. O God! this is enough to break their hearts; for, in that short time you speak of, they could have exercised a million of most refined, heroical, and Divine acts in Heaven: and all this is lost. And if one act of virtue here on earth gives so much glory to God and so much joy to the whole Court of Heaven, what a loss is it, to have carelessly let slip the occasion of exercising a million of such acts in Heaven, which can never be recalled! I speak not for the merit, nor for the content there is in doing well, nor for the degrees of glory which are lost. No, I touch not yet what concerns their interest; but I only treat of the glory which they might have given to God by their signal services of love and adoration; all which precious treasure is negligently cast away. When that good poor widow cast her two brass mites into the treasury,[1] Christ Jesus was as well pleased as if she had cast in both her eyes, or as many worlds. And when St. Martin cut his cloak in two, to give one half of it to a needy beggar, our Blessed Saviour vouchsafed to clothe Himself with that half-garment, and turning to the Angels, who were about Him in great numbers, and withal showing them that livery of His servant, "Behold," said He, "how nobly this young catechumen has attired Me." If the Almighty Monarch of the world makes so great a reckoning of one act of virtue, one small charity, what vexation will it breed in a soul of the other world, to consider that

[1] St. Mark xii. 42; St. Luke xxi. 2.

other glorious souls, and perhaps some of her alliance or acquaintance, are already daily spending themselves in acts of highest perfection, and that she has wilfully thrown away all this glory, which she might have given to Almighty God; and in place of acting so gloriously in the empyrean Heaven, all resplendent with Divine fire, she is constrained to lie parching and frying in the flames of Purgatory, and undergoing a thousand inconsolable punishments.

Now, if you lay on the back of this the consideration of interest; good God! what a terrible grief will it be to holy souls, to reflect on the loss of so many degrees of grace and glory, which they have foolishly and negligently cast away, for mere trifles, and without hope of recovery! One grain of grace is certainly more worth than all the world. What a misery, then, what a grief, and what a confusion will it be, to have prodigally sold, for nothing, so many grains, so many graces, and so many worlds of true happiness? "Since I have lost my Empire," cried Nero, "there is no living for me." "Could I but one day arrive to be King of Athens," said a Grecian, "I could be content to walk barefoot to the bottomless pit of Hell: so great a value do I set upon swaying the sceptre but one day; and so precious is the least grain of glory in my estimation." Now, if these ambitious souls have such feelings for a little vain and transitory glory, what will *they* have who breathe nothing but the pure love of God, and know how to set a true value upon glory, in those heavenly mansions? This, in the opinion of learned

Suarez, is a worm, the most sensible,[1] and the most vexatious of all others, in that Church of patient sufferers.

But since these two worms, Love and Grief, combine together, to martyr those poor souls, which of the two is the most grievous, charity, or contrition? They have neither of them teeth to bite with; but they conjure up such tempests of biting thoughts, in these unfortunate souls, as give them a world of afflictions. Methinks I hear them discourse, in their turns, much after this fashion:

Love. O ungrateful and disloyal soul! hast thou so easily lost the sight of thy merciful Redeemer?

Grief. Die for shame, unlucky soul! and die for grief, for having so easily merited that God should thus banish thee in these base flames.

Love. What hast thou got, by losing so good a God, Whom thou wert already to have possessed and enjoyed?

Grief. What hast thou got, but deadly heart-breakings, for having preferred sin before His infinite favours?

Love. In lieu of riding upon the wings of Seraphim, and burning with love, as they do in Heaven, miserable creature! thou art now to be locked up underground, in a furnace of hellish flames.

Grief. In lieu of calling to mind the benefits of this great God, thou art to be gnawn to the very heart, with the sharp teeth of an infamous grief, and to pass so many whole days in sighs and sobs, and unprofitable lamentations.

[1] As above, p. 131.

Love. So many lesser souls have taken their flight straight up into Heaven; and what! dost thou stick there below, in those loathsome pits of fire?

Grief. So many simple idiots, by leading innocent lives, are now in glory; whilst thou, idle wretch, liest there melting in unquenchable flames.

Love. What a madness was it for thee, to cast away so many precious hours of seeing God; when one glimpse of that Divine Object is worth a million of worlds?

Grief. Could there be a greater folly, than, for a slight pastime, to offend so loving a Father, and put Him upon a necessity of punishing thee here like a criminal, to wear off thy felonious and rebellious offences?

Love. What is become of so many degrees of glory, so many ecstatical acts, so many Divine canticles, which thou shouldst have sung in Heaven, since thou art buried underground, in a sulphureous lake?

Grief. What is become of all thy cursed possessions, which now persecute thy soul with a fresh remembrance of thy sottish disloyalty?

Love. Thou wert created for God; canst thou live without Him, and without glassing thyself in that eternal mirror and sparkling rays of His Divine countenance?

Grief. Thou wert placed in the sublunary world to serve Him; canst thou, without swooning for grief, call to mind the life which thou hast led; and is not the remembrance of thy excesses more

frightful to thee than the very sight of Hell itself?

Love. He that loves God, had rather sink down into a thousand hells than lose Him for a moment.

Grief. He that loves God, had rather eternally suffer all the torments of Hell than lie one instant in the hell of hells; that is, in the bosom of a mortal sin.

Thus violently do these two virtues, of Love and Grief, make their several onsets on this poor soul; thus terribly do they bait her, one after another; thus cruelly do they lay her under the heavy press of unavoidable reproaches.

This is not all: for divines teach, and are peremptory upon the matter, that the more a soul loves God, and the greater saint she is, the more sensible is she of the biting of these unmerciful worms. And, by the way, you are to note that these holy souls do not suffer these afflictions only to purge themselves. No; though there were no other motive but that of the love of God, and a certain honesty[1] well becoming their noble nature; though there were nothing to be got by it; yet would they not desist from exercising these generous and heroical acts, and from giving God a signal testimony of the dear affection of their souls. In the meantime, this their honesty costs them dear; and these acts of charity and contrition are extreme painful. And since the sting of honour wounds deeper, pains sorer, and goes more to the quick, than pain itself, hence it follows that these holy

[1] *i.e.* Sense of what is worthy and befitting.

souls, whether for love or for justice' sake, are upon a most cruel rack, and so become an object of great commiseration; and it cannot be expressed how beholden they reckon themselves to those that endeavour to comfort them, and are mindful of their calamity. Now, the reason why divines believe that the most perfect souls are the most afflicted with these voluntary kinds of punishments, as I may term them, is, because they all actuate[1] according to the uttermost sphere and extent of their virtue; so that a soul that has a greater proportion of love, acts with more vigour, and plunges herself deeper in the profound abyss of love, and in the gall and bitterness of contrition. And, as this proceeds out of mere love, notwithstanding their so sensible misfortune, they would not lose an ounce of it: so tender is their love to God, and so great the horror they have of all that is displeasing in His sight. But of this more at large hereafter.

Now I must tell you plainly, all that I have yet said is, in a manner, nothing to what I am going to say. The Saints and Doctors of God's Church, as I have already insinuated, unanimously agree, that the most grievous pain in Purgatory is to be deprived, for a time, of the Beatifical Vision, and to be laid aside, and banished, as unworthy to contemplate the bright Sun of the Divinity. This pain of loss, as they call it, is the pain of pains: it is the deepest pit of Purgatory, and the very bellows that blow the coals there. This evil, of the privation of the sight of God, is, according to

i.e. Produce their acts.

St. Thomas,[1] of its own nature far exceeding all the temporal punishments of the world: and thus he proves it. Will you know the full latitude of grief, and take an exact survey of all its dimensions? Reflect with yourself, what is the good which it deprives us of, what the present evil we endure, what powerful instinct we have to repossess that good which we have lost, what obligation we have thereunto both by grace and nature; and lastly, what a violent application and vigour of spirit we feel in our souls, in the pursuit of it. Now all this is extreme in the evil we now treat of. For it is the precious sight of God which is lost, Who is the consummation of all bliss; it is the very dregs of bitterness those poor souls drink down at large draughts; it is the only beautiful Object, for which they were created, and redeemed with the Most Precious Blood of Christ, for which they breathed out so many sighs in this mortal life, and which they do so passionately pursue, when once delivered out of their bodies, that there is nothing to be compared to that holy ardour. No; I do not think that an arrow shot from a bow, or an eagle upon the wing, or the wind, or lightning, or the sun in his full career or flight itself, flies away faster. I cannot believe that fire mounts up, or a stone sinks down to its centre, with more vehemency, nor that the heavens can be swifter in their motions, than these vigorous souls are in running, flying, and precipitating themselves into God—when, alas! they find their wings clipped, and their whole flight

[1] St. Thomas in 4. a. 21. a. 1.

so unhappily stopped, that no tongue is able to express the resentment[1] they feel at it.

I know that St. Bonaventure strives to sweeten this martyrdom; and will not have this privation, or pain of loss, to be so cruel as others make it: and in particular he maintains that it does not always exceed the greatest torments of this life. I will not take upon me the boldness, to make myself judge and umpire between St. Thomas and St. Bonaventure, that is to say, between an angel and a seraph, an angelical doctor and a seraphical doctor; in a word, between two famous oracles of divinity, two glorious suns placed in the several spheres of their Religious Orders. But what remedy? whether of the two shall we believe? The one assures us that the privation of the sight of God is a martyrdom beyond all the martyrdoms of this world; the other tells us for a truth that it were certainly a most grievous torment, but that it is sometimes so tempered and alleviated by other considerations, that it equals not the severest rigour of the torments of this world. What? is there no means to reconcile these two heavenly Doctors? May we not say, they have both reason on their sides? They have both won, and both lost the field; and, whilst the one looks as it were to the north, and the other to the south, they both meet in the meridian line of charity, and rest securely in the bosom of the same truth. St. Thomas means to say, that if you look upon this privation, as it relates to God, the loss is incomparable; and he

[1] As above, p. 139.

speaks the very truth: that the soul has not a more violent instinct, than that which carries her to God, this is also an undoubted truth: that there cannot be a heavier loss than that of God; and is not this also clear? that unless this grief be otherwise moderated, it is the most intolerable of all others; this is as evident as the rest: that you cannot deprive a soul of a more lovely object, and consequently, that there is not the thing in this world whose absence is of its nature so sensible;[1] who can doubt of all this? Certainly, if you state the case thus, and go no further, St. Thomas has clearly got the victory. Now let us hear St. Bonaventure, who tells us that this evil of privation, being joined with a most certain hope of seeing God erelong, may be much lessened; that, even in this world, we lack the sight of God, and yet by reason of other diversions,[2] are not so much concerned for it; that the holy souls most contentedly submit themselves to this piece of severity, and the more willingly they do it, the less are they burdened with sorrow; that many Saints, out of pure charity, and for the glory of God, have offered themselves to be thus eternally deprived of the sight of God, and have taken great pleasure in it; with a world of other reasons, of which I shall treat in the next Survey, where I muster up the comforts of the souls in Purgatory. Has he not reason for all this, I pray you? Nay, have they not both reason for what they teach? Methinks, they do like those

[1] *i.e.* So deeply to be felt.
[2] *i.e.* Objects distracting the attention.

that look upon your pictures, which are drawn after the Italian fashion, by mathematical projection: one looks upon them this way, and sees a fair picture of St. Michael; another that way, and sees St. Laurence upon a gridiron, represented to the life. The one vows he sees an angel, and he says true; the other is ready to swear he sees a martyr, and he is not mistaken: meanwhile, they contest about it, and neither of them will forsake his opinion, whilst both are in the right, though they seem to wrong one another. Let us therefore conclude, that in truth there is something in this pain of loss which surpasses all that can be imagined in this world; but that God is pleased in some cases to mingle certain comfortable sweets with it, which take off much of the bitterness which the souls would otherwise find therein.

§ 3.—*Other considerations, much aggravating these pains.*

But that which adds new life and strength to these quick and piercing pains is to see that they have not only wilfully lost for ever so many degrees of glory, whereof the least is an inestimable treasure, but are also estranged from the sight of God, by their own carelessness and tepidity. To forego the sight of God, out of charity, is to find a kind of paradise in Hell; but to lose the sight of God by one's own fault, though it be but for a moment, is a hell indeed to a soul that loves. Naturalists tell us of a little bird that is so far in love with the sun, that she lives no longer than she can behold it, and

so lives but a few hours: for no sooner does the sun set, but the poor bird, seeing no longer the living rays of the sun, believing it to be really dead, dies also, as not being able to survive the sole object of its love. God is the Sun of our souls: and therefore these worthy souls, seeing this Sun quite eclipsed from their eyes, and overcast with the sable night of a suffering people, would doubtless die if they could. For, God being the life of their life, having lost this life, how should they live? When the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph had lost sight of the little Infant Jesus, what tongue can express the affliction of their souls? He only knows who has tried it by experience, and whose eyes God has opened, what it is to lose the sight of God, and to lose it through his own fault, and to be, as it were, pointed at for a wretch that has lost his God.

I wept, says holy David,[1] and I wept night and day, when they would be still thus upbraiding me: Why, David, where is thy God? the God for Whom thou hadst so much love? Oh, it is a dagger at my very heart, and they kill me when they ask me the question. Now this dagger is never out of the hearts of those desolate and languishing souls. "I will either die this day," cried Cæsar, "or I will be the chief in Rome; for what likelihood is there that Cæsar should live, and not be Cæsar; live, and not live in the quality which is due to his birth and courage?" Oh, how often does this thought assault and persecute these holy souls: "Alas! how easily could I have purchased a million of degrees of

[1] Psalm xli. 4.

essential glory, and got laurels upon laurels, crowns upon crowns, and trophies without number. And, unfortunate wretch as I am, I have lost all this eternally, for mere sloth, for want of a little striving for it. Am I not worthy to undergo the pains I suffer, though they were a thousand times more rigorous and intolerable?" I do not wonder that divines affirm this heart-breaking to be far worse than the privation of the sight of God: for to this they can find some ease and comfort; but the other is altogether inconsolable, since it is purely through their own faults.

You may imagine all the virtues to come in upon this; and either voluntarily, or by a sweet kind of violence, to set upon these captive souls, with a new and fierce storm of reproaches.

Faith. If you believed there was a Purgatory, indeed, miserable creature! why did you not live so as to avoid its cruel torments?

Hope. If you aimed to gain Paradise, why did you play the fool, so as to amuse yourself with such trifles, and to lose so much precious time in them?

Charity. Oh, how well have you deserved to burn in these flames, since you often scorned to burn with mine, and to serve God with a heart all inflamed with Divine fire; burn, then, at leisure, and die here for shame; since there was a time thou wouldst neither live nor die with sacred and holy love.

Penance. Is it you that were so frightened with my rigours, so terrified with my sweet austerities, with which I would have preserved you from these

cruel torments? Tell me now, where are your damask beds, your soft quilts, your down pillows, your fine sheets, that were smoother and whiter than milk and cream? your sweet bags and perfumes, all your dainties, all your vanities, all that modish attire and bravery,[1] which did so besot and enchant you? One sigh, one tear, one act of self-denial, would have kept you out of this place of torments; answer me now, and let me hear what you have to say for yourself.

Prudence. Foolish and senseless soul! how came you so to lose your wits, and even common sense too; as, knowing the rigour of these flames, to use no caution to prevent them? Oh, how well are these horrid punishments bestowed! This vile creature was so simple as to believe that, continually offending God, without making Him amends for it in an honourable way, she should pass scot-free, and supply for all with a slight *peccavi*, and so enter into Heaven. What folly was this? As if it were a sufficient pretence to be wicked and rebellious, because God is full of mercy. Sit still, then, at the daily task of thy sufferings, and rather think of doubling them: for it is meet that God should show Himself to be God, as well by justice as by mercy; and that both these Divine attributes should play their parts in their turns.

Fortitude. How oft have I offered my service to strengthen you, O you careless and lazy soul! How oft have I offered to lend you my arm, my heart, and all my invincible power, to support and bolster up

[1] *i.e.* Rich and attractive dress.

your faint-heartedness and weakness: and you have disdained to employ it! Now, when you are forced to bear the heavy burthen of God's just vengeance, have I not just reason to withdraw my assistance?

Temperance. I told you as much, long since; that, for want of bridling your unruly passions, the time would come when you would curse the hours of all your excesses and disorders, without having power to redeem them but by excessive torments. Do you expect now, inconsiderate soul, that I should pour out water upon your flames; you that have ever slighted me?

Thus all the holy choir of God's darlings, the innocent virtues, come one after another, and beat upon this anvil, laying whole loads of most heavy strokes upon this miserable soul: so that you cannot well imagine what more grievous fortune can befall her: insomuch that the soul, so oppressed with evils, and so furiously battered on all sides with a fresh supply of torments, is forced to cry out: "Miserable that I am, and a thousand times miserable! am I not wretched enough, but must the virtues themselves join their forces with my frailties, to persecute me, and complete my misery? How long, alas! how long will you thus cruelly combine to undo me? you, Love, and you, Grief; you, by a thousand sweets, and you, by a thousand severities; you, by flattering my pains, and you, by redoubling them; you, by showing me life, and you, by showing me death; you, by estranging me from Paradise, and you, by conducting me to the very gates of Hell; you, by sweet expostulations, and

you, by bitter reproaches, which go to my very heart? How long, I say once more, will you be so cruelly kind, as to join your forces to embitter the martyrdom of a poor creature, now grown to be the most miserable wretch under Heaven? Forbear; at length, forbear! it is not fit the severity of God's justice should eclipse all the rays of His infinite mercy!"

All were lost,[1] if the opinion of some were true, who will needs have the devils play the executioners in Purgatory. Lord, what a terrible war would these wicked apostates raise against the holy souls, who are, erelong, to take possession of the places which they have lost in Heaven! With what a rage would they assault them, and wreak their barbarous fury upon them, were they to be treated at their mercy! But I had rather follow the opinion of others,[2] who, with far more reason, methinks, believe that the devils have no power to do them the least mischief. Tell me, what good would they get by it? since the souls can neither offend God, nor lose Paradise; which is the only butt against which the devils level their whole malice. Origen fancied[3] the devil to be so sullenly proud, that having been once foiled by a soul, he will never after come near it, nor have anything more to do with it. If this be so, the devils will beware how they come near Purgatory, where there are so many

[1] *i.e.* We should, indeed, have reached the most terrible consideration which the thought of Purgatory could furnish.

[2] St. Thomas, in 4. d. 20 et 21; Suarez, d. 46, sec. 3.

[3] The author rightly puts this opinion among the "fancies" that great but erring mind.

victorious souls. Besides, we may suppose that God will not permit it; nor can we see what good can arise thence to God's glory. Possibly, also, these punishments which the devils would inflict, might shorten the term of the soul's durance; and this may be the cause why they are loth to meddle with them, lest they send them so much the sooner into Heaven. However, some of the learned[1] think that these souls, bordering so near upon Hell, may very probably see the devils and the damned souls, and hear their most execrable blasphemies; and that this is no small addition to their pains, to hear their good God, Whom they entirely love, to be incessantly cursed, blasphemed, and renounced by those devilish and sacrilegious spirits. St. Catharine of Siena was heard to say, she had rather suffer all the torments of Hell, than hear one blasphemy against God, for Whom she had so much cordial love, and Who is of Himself so lovely. I confess, this is a sweet kind of torment, as proceeding from supernatural and Divine love; but I maintain, withal, that it is a torment, and a most grievous one: because, though the arrows of love are gilded over, or made of pure gold, yet they are as sharp-pointed, and as piercing to the quick, as those of grief, though they be of steel.

Confusion is one of the most intolerable evils which can befall a soul: and therefore St. Paul,[2] speaking of our Blessed Saviour, insists much upon this, that He had the courage, and the love for us all, to overcome the pain of a horrible confusion,

[1] Suarez, sec. n. 10. [2] Hebrews xii. 2.

which doubtless is an insupportable evil, to a man of intelligence and courage. Tell me, then, if you can, what a burning shame, and what a terrible confusion it must needs be to those noble and generous souls, to behold themselves overwhelmed with a confused chaos of fire, and such a base fire, which affords no other light but a sullen glimmering, choked up with a sulphureous and stinking smoke, and in the interim to know that the souls of many country clowns, mere idiots, poor women and simple religious persons, go straight up to Heaven, whilst they lie there burning: they, that were so knowing, so rich, and so wise; they that were councillors to kings, eminent preachers of God's Word, and renowned oracles in the world; they that were so great divines, so great statesmen, so capable of high employments. This confusion is much heightened by their further knowing how easily they might have avoided all this, and would not. Sometimes they would have given whole mountains of gold to be rid of a stone in the kidneys, or a fit of the gout, colic, or burning fever. And for a handful of silver they might have redeemed many years' torments in that fiery furnace; and, alas! they chose rather to give it to their dogs and their horses, and sometimes to men more beasts than they, and much more unworthy. Methinks, this thought must be more vexing than the fire itself, though never so grievous.

And yet there remains one thought more, which certainly has a great share in completing their martyrdom: and that is, the remembrance of their

children or heirs, which they left behind them; who swim in nectar and live jollily on the goods which they purchased with the sweat of their brows, and yet are so ungrateful, so brutish, and so barbarous that they will scarce vouchsafe to say a *Pater noster* in a whole month for their souls who brought them into the world; and who, to place them in a terrestrial paradise of all worldly delights, made a hard venture of their own souls, and had like to have exchanged a temporal punishment for an eternal. The remnants and superfluities of their lackeys, a throw of dice, and yet less than that, might have set them free from these hellish torments; and these wicked, ungrateful wretches would not so much as think on it.

§ 4.—*How long the souls are detained in Purgatory.*

If all these punishments passed away like a tempest, if the time of their continuance were but short, their case were not so deplorable. But how long, think you, does a soul dwell in Purgatory? First, it is most certain, that these pains are not eternal; otherwise, it were not Purgatory, but Hell itself: for in this chiefly lies the difference between Hell and Purgatory, that the pains of Purgatory last but for a time; those of Hell, for an eternity. Again, it is most certain, that they survive not the Day of Judgment; and St. Augustine[1] proves it evidently: because then all souls are to receive their last doom, and be immoveably fixed in an eternity of good or evil. Thirdly, it is most certain, that all

[1] St. Augustine, *De Civit.* c. 16.

the souls shall not be there punished equally, neither for extent of time nor proportion of torment: for, as their crimes were not equal, so the punishment cannot be equal, where justice bears the sway. Fourthly, it is also certain, says the learned and judicious Suarez,[1] after others, that we must not apply the revelations of certain devout persons to all the souls in Purgatory; but rather ought to be very reserved in this kind, and not easily to give credit to all such stories which pass for revelations; for though God, in His secret judgments, may be pleased to punish some disloyal souls after a particular manner, yet must we take heed how we draw general conclusions from particular cases. For since private revelations are not articles of faith, we must be very cautious, and proceed warily in this matter; especially where we see such kind of revelations seemingly to clash one against another. We must therefore pass by such extraordinary cases, and honour them with due respect; but not build so much upon them as to draw thence universal maxims. Wherefore in this place I mean not to speak but of the common and ordinary style of God's providence; laying aside all particular visions, and personal exemplary punishments, which God has reserved to Himself. Now, there have been some so bold as to maintain that all the souls lie in Purgatory but a few hours, and are then quit and released of their pains. Their grounds are: First, because the pains may be so doubled, and screwed up to such a height, as to equal any extension of

[1] Suarez, d. 46, sec. 4, n. 6.

pain whatsoever. Secondly, because the souls there do exercise such acts of love, and other sublime virtues, all which conspire to purify these poor creatures, so that the business is soon despatched. Were this true, it were very good news; but the mischief is, that most divines censure this assertion as too bold and temerarious: and, in truth, it has very little or no probability, and were a way in effect[1] to destroy Purgatory; since we may cut off half of those few hours they speak of, by redoubling the pains, and another half of these by redoubling them again, and so go on, still halving the time, by doubling the pains, till we reduce them to a quarter of an hour, or half a quarter, or possibly to an instant, or so little durance as to be scarce begun but ended. Which kind of Purgatory, though it may be the case with those souls which depart immediately before the Day of Judgment, when the intensity of the pain must supply for the extent of time which will be then wanting, forasmuch there is to be no more Purgatory after that general accounting Day—yet to apply it commonly to other souls, where there is no need of such subtleties, would be confounding all things. It is the ordinary course of God's justice to proceed by degrees; and, therefore, there must be a competent time allotted for those punishments. And this is the general belief of the Church, that the souls are kept there for a time, some more, some less, each one according to his desert; and though perhaps some choice souls do but, as it were, kiss the gates of Purgatory,

[1] *i.e.* Would be, in fact, a method to destroy, &c.

and rather feel the smoke than the fire, yet the greater part of them lie there for some considerable time, to satisfy the sweet rigour of Divine justice. I am not ignorant that some great divines have believed, that if a soul stay there for a year or two, it is all. For, say they, how can you require more of them than to be two years miserably tormented in a burning furnace? That which here might have been redeemed with a tear of true contrition, or with a sigh of ardent charity, can it not be purged with flames of fire in two whole years in the other world? The most barbarous cruelty in this life is scarce ever seen to reach beyond a few hours: and what shall we then say of two years in Purgatory, which are, as it were, two ages, or two little eternities, so great are the torments? Shall it not be enough to purify the most unclean soul in the world, so she be in the state of grace? But yet this opinion is not received in the Church; and it is a great madness to attempt anything contrary to the common judgment of the Church and her learned Doctors.

Sotus held a singular opinion of his own;[1] that no soul remains in Purgatory above ten years. For, said he, we must set some bounds to the rigour of God's justice, Who doth all things in number, weight, and measure, and is said to dispose all things sweetly. And is not ten years of most bitter pains a great number, a grievous weight, and an overflowing measure? to say nothing of so many prayers, so many Masses, so many tears, so many

[1] Sec. in 4, d. 17, q. 3.

privileged altars, and Plenary Indulgences; so many alms and other good deeds of the living; and then the most powerful intercession of the whole Court of Heaven, but especially of our Blessed Lady, and her Beloved Son, Who is the Attorney-General of the whole Church, and Who pleads for it with His most persuasive and Divine rhetoric. Yet for all this, I must tell you, many divines lay heavy censures upon this opinion, not hesitating to call it, not only temerarious but also erroneous; and the common sense of the Church is quite contrary, as appears by the immemorial custom of perpetual foundations of set Masses, to be yearly said, for such particular persons, and to continue to the world's end; all which would be needless, if Almighty God put a period to their punishments after ten years; for to what purpose are those Masses after the ten years are expired? And, though the most learned of this age will not take upon them to condemn this opinion as erroneous, yet they all accuse it of much temerity; because, in truth, this whole business is very uncertain, as being a secret locked up in the cabinet of God Himself, and letters sealed up, which our Saviour would not hitherto open to His Spouse the Church; so that, whilst it remains in the nature of a secret, we must not presume to define anything precisely. Only this we know, that many souls do but touch Purgatory, as it were with their finger, and away; others lie there whole hours, days, months, and years: and, as we are not easily to credit those visions, which threaten the souls in Purgatory, with a con-

tinuance of their torments until the Last Day, so are we to believe that God can well punish some of them so long, that the space of ten years, in comparison, should seem little or nothing to it. Hence it is a very laudable and pious custom to found Masses in perpetuity; because, alas, who knows whether he may not be in the number of those unfortunate souls who are to be kept there so long? How few know truly the state of their own souls, and the debts they are to pay to the severity of our most just Judge! He is, indeed, full of clemency; but such as is ever accompanied with an impartial justice, worthy of God. I may add here, that the piety of the founders looks not only upon the releasing of their own souls out of torments, which they are assured will have an end sooner or later; but they open their hearts and bowels of charity, and extend it to others, who from time to time shall be in Purgatory, and, very possibly, have nobody to remember them in their devotions. This certainly is a work of charity, well becoming a good Catholic and a well-disposed soul: to provide so as to co-operate, even after his death, to the help and salvation of other souls, and to be ever and anon sending some into Heaven, by antedating the time of their deliverance, and increasing the number of the glorious Saints. Meantime, what an inconsolable grief is it to the poor souls to see themselves plunged, over head and ears, in flames of fire; and condemned to remain there ten, twenty, a hundred years, and perhaps to the world's end, if their friends upon earth do not afford them their best assistance?

There are some few of late are fallen so far into the contrary extreme, that they cannot afford that a soul, once in Purgatory, should ever get out before the Day of Judgment. But as this strange paradox took its rise chiefly from a false apprehension of the nature of a spiritual substance, and other wild principles of a newly-minted philosophy, so is it generally cried down, and contradicted by many known apparitions and revelations, which the reader will meet with in this treatise, attested by such weighty authors and Fathers of the Church, that he has little reason to suspect them for old wives' tales or melancholy dreams, as these men would have them. It seems, moreover, to have been blasted long ago, and condemned in a particular Bull of Pope Benedict XI., and in the holy Council of Florence,[1] where it was expressly defined, that "those souls which, after they have contracted the blemish of sin, are" purged "either in their bodies, or being unclothed of their bodies, are" presently "received into Heaven." And since the author of this extravagance will have tradition to be the sole rule of our faith (of which tradition we have no clearer proof than from the testimony of the Church), let him but look into the general doctrine and practice of the Church, both now at this present, and time out of mind, and he shall discover as clear a tradition for this common persuasion of the souls being released out of Purgatory, some sooner, some later, according to their own deserts and the relief of our suffrages, as for any other thing

[1] In *Bullar. Rom.* Conc. Flor. in lit. Unionis, art. 4.

in the world. Do not good people generally ground themselves upon this, when they offer up their prayers, give alms, procure Masses and dirges, apply Indulgences, for the present relief of their deceased friends? Is not the whole practice of Christians, in all that concerns their piety to the faithful departed, built so wholly upon this, that were it not true, we must conclude that the whole Catholic Church has been all along fooled by her pastors and doctors? Who has ever hitherto so much as fancied it in a dream, that his suffrages for the dead were to be of no greater advantage to them, than so far forth as they had power to advance the time appointed for the Day of Judgment? which, for my part, I apprehend so coldly, that, did I not rely upon better motives, I should soon lay aside all devotion for the souls departed.

But I mean not here to dispute the question, since this treatise is not intended so much in a polemical as in an affectuous and moving way. And therefore I leave it for others, who have already entered the lists, and are engaged in the quarrel. And so I take no notice how it may consist with God's impartial justice that, whereas many souls may leave this world in the same condition as to Purgatory, that is, in this author's opinion, with the same burden of depraved affections, some of them shall lie a thousand years in Purgatory, to wit, those that die a thousand years before the Day of Judgment; and others but a day, or an hour, or a moment, to wit, those that die immediately before that general reckoning day. For, since he acknowledges no

other pain in Purgatory but that which flows from the said crooked inclinations and affections bent against reason, which I suppose to be the same in all, why should some of them (as must necessarily follow on these principles) shake them off so soon, and others groan so long under them? Again, I say nothing how harshly it sounds in a Christian's ear that a holy soul in the other world should not only still pursue the same wicked inclinations, for example, to drunkenness, gluttony, and carnality, which it had in this life, but that this should be its only punishment. Neither do I say how, in this opinion, great sinners, that die immediately after baptism (who certainly go directly into Heaven), must needs carry their Purgatory with them into Heaven.[1] For, since it is evident that Baptism does not blot out their perverse inclinations, they cannot be dispossessed of them, but must of necessity carry them into the other world, as well as others; and consequently must have their Purgatory in Heaven: Purgatory being nothing else, in this author's opinion, but the inherent strife and fury of such irrational affections. I pass by a world of other absurdities: because my aim, as I told you, in publishing this treatise, is not to canvass curious and impertinent questions of Purgatory, but to move the reader to a solid devotion for the poor souls, which I fear is not a little cooled since these fond opinions came to light.

But now, methinks, I hear my reader very inquisitive to know—

[1] Trid. Sess. 14, c. 2; Flor. Act. 4 cit.

§ 5.—*Whether their pains grow less and less.*

It is pity to see, sometimes, how your greatest divines are entangled and lost in their over-subtle speculations. As for the pain of loss, which the souls endure by being deprived of the sight of God, they agree that it is daily much lessened; for, seeing the time draw nearer in which they are to be made happy with the sight of God, Whom they love so ardently, it exceedingly rejoices them, and certainly cannot but much sweeten, and consequently lessen their pains, by the frequent repetitions of that devout aspiration, which St. Teresa was wont to use, when she heard the clock strike: "O lovely hour, how dost thou rejoice me, by bringing me the welcome news that I am now a whole hour nearer to the sight of God!" For a heart that loves cannot but be overjoyed to know that he approaches to the fair Object of his love, though it be but a moment nearer. But as for the pain of sense, your Doctors are divided; some hold that, as regards the continuance, that is certainly shortened every day by the day which is past, which is evident; and in particular, that the prayers of the faithful obtain from God an abridgment of the length of the time which He assigned for their punishment; so that the more one prays for the souls, the more is cut off of the time of their suffering, which by that means becomes the more tolerable. But as for the sharpness and intenseness of the pain, and the action or activity of the fire, that is as grievous in the last moment as at the

first, and as painful in the end as at the beginning of their Purgatory. And they would comfort the souls hereby, as if this were best for them; because the greater the pains are which they endure, the sooner are they purged and made worthy to enjoy the presence of God. Others teach, that both the pain and the time are continually lessened, according to the proportion of the relief which they receive from the suffrages of the Church. And why not? since God's goodness is so great, such is the desire of the Church that begs it, and the tears of the faithful pretend to no less; and we must not consider the fire as an element working naturally, and equally at all times, but rather as an instrument of God's justice, Who gives it more or less force and power to work upon the souls as He pleases. Why should Almighty God, Who is so loving a Father, refuse to give this relief, at the earnest suit of children, in behalf of their parents, brothers, sisters, and dearest friends; I say, at their instance, who are so sensible of their torments, and so much concerned for their ease and relief? I willingly embrace this opinion, as more worthy of the bowels of mercy, more sympathizing with the Heart of Christ Jesus, and better suiting with the prayers of the Church and the sighs of Christians. And certainly, none can better clear this difficulty than the souls themselves who feel the pains we speak of; and these have often, by God's permission, appeared to their friends and devout persons, and borne witness for this truth, that their pains were still lessened as they received new succour from

the pious endeavours of their friends upon earth, until they came at last to cease and reach their term. And we must not here be too nice and hard of belief; for, as it is an argument of too much rashness and folly, to give credit to all pretended visions, of what nature soever, so it argues too much brutishness and profaneness to believe none, especially when they are authorized by the Church, and by persons of authority and credit beyond exception: so that we must either believe them, or believe nothing in this world.

§ 6.—*A notable example in confirmation of all the preceding doctrine.*

Before I leave off finishing this picture, or put a period to the representation of the pains of Purgatory, I cannot but relate a very remarkable history, which will be as a living picture before your eyes. But be sure you take it not to be of the number of those idle stories which pass for old wives' tales, or mere imaginations of cracked brains and simple souls. No: I will tell you nothing but what Venerable Bede, so grave an author, witnesses to have happened in his time, and to have been generally believed all over England, without contradiction; and to have been the cause of wonderful effects: and which is so authentical that Cardinal Bellarmine, a man of such judgment as the world knows, having related it himself, concludes thus: "For my part I firmly believe this history, as very conformable to the Holy Scripture, and whereof I can have no doubt without wronging truth, and

wounding my own conscience, which ought readily to yield assent unto that which is attested by so many and so credible witnesses, and confirmed by such holy and admirable events."

About the year of our Lord 690, a certain Englishman, in the county of Northumberland, by name Brithelmus, being dead for a time, was conducted to the place of Purgatory by a guide, whose countenance and apparel was full of light: you may imagine it was his good angel. Here he was shown two broad valleys of a vast and infinite length, one full of glowing firebrands and terrible flames, the other as full of hail, ice, and snow; and in both these were innumerable souls, who, as with a whirlwind, were tossed up and down out of the intolerable scorching flames, into the insufferable rigours of cold, and out of these into those again, without a moment of repose or respite. This he took to be Hell, so frightful were those torments; but his good angel told him no, it was Purgatory, where the souls did penance for their sins, and especially such as had deferred their conversion until the hour of death: and that many of them were set free before the Day of Judgment, for the good prayers, alms, and fasts of the living, and chiefly by the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Now this holy man, being raised again from death to life by the power of God, first made a faithful relation of all that he had seen, to the great amazement of the hearers, then retired himself into the church, and spent the whole night in prayer; and soon after, gave away his whole estate, partly to his wife and children, partly to the

poor, and taking upon him the habit and profession of a monk, led so austere a life, that even if his tongue had been silent, yet his life and conversation spake aloud what wonders he had seen in the other world. Sometimes they would see him, old as he was, in freezing water up to the ears, praying and singing with much sweetness and incredible fervour; and if they asked him, "Brother, alas! how can you suffer so much sharp and biting cold?" "O my friends," would he say, "I have seen other manner of cold than this." Thus, when he even groaned under the voluntary burden of a world of most cruel mortifications, and was questioned how it was possible for a weak and broken body like his to undergo such austerities, "Alas, my dear brethren," would he still say, "I have seen far greater austerities than these: they are but roses and perfumes in comparison of what I have seen in the subterraneous lakes of Purgatory." And in these kinds of austerities he spent the remainder of his life, and made a holy end, and purchased an eternal Paradise, for having had but a sight of the pains of Purgatory. And we, dear Christians, if we believed in good earnest, or could but once procure to have a true sight or apprehension of them, should certainly have other thoughts, and live in another fashion, than we do.

THE SECOND SURVEY.

A GLIMPSE OF THE PARADISE OF PURGATORY, OR OF THE INEFFABLE JOYS AND HEAVENLY CONSOLATIONS OF THE SOULS THERE.

I DO not style that the paradise of Purgatory which some have fancied, as if the souls, having almost clean cancelled out all those impurities which they here contracted, were to be conveyed into a terrestrial Paradise or a most delicious garden of pleasure, smiling with a Divine amenity, there to dispose themselves the better to see God, without suffering any pain of sense. For, although this fancy may appear to have something of piety, yet has it little or nothing of solidity; and I am resolved to lay down nothing here that is not very massive, solid, and substantially well grounded. Now, the Council of Florence[1] seems to take away all credit from this opinion of a terrestrial Paradise; and so, down goes all that goodly fabric built in the air. For, says the Council, either the souls are quite purged, and, if so, they are immediately received into Heaven and made worthy to behold God, or they want still more purging and refining, and they are still like to lie by it in Purgatory.

[1] Flor. Sess. ult.

From whence it clearly follows, that the souls departed can have no time left them to entertain themselves in those pleasant gardens and sweet breathings, which these so much magnify.

Wherefore, under the notion of the paradise of Purgatory, I understand the excessive joys of these captive souls, the incomparable acts of their will and understanding, and the continual favours showered down upon them from Heaven, even amidst their most cruel torments.

§ 1.—*How these excessive joys can be consistent with their unspeakable torments.*

To make this good, we must first suppose that the actions of a soul disengaged from the body are quite of a different nature from those which she exercises while she is chained to a lump of flesh, drowned in blood and other humours, kept in thraldom by her tyrannical passions and brutish affections, overburdened with deadly frights and fears, and leading a kind of slavish and miserable life. Tertullian came near the mark, when he compared a soul in this world to a coachman that is to guide four unruly horses without reins; a soldier that has his sword in his hands, but his arms tied; a swift courser that would run, but is tethered; a bird that would fly, but has his wings clammed up with bird-lime. Now, when the soul is once set free from this bondage, and lives at liberty, this coachman drives, this soldier strikes, this courser runs, this bird flies, and this soul does what she pleases, without control. Besides,

that which makes the actions of a soul in this life to be so weak and imperfect is the necessary dependence which she has on the body, into which she is so ingrafted that she seems to be but one and the self-same thing with it. If the body be oppressed with pain, the soul is so deeply plunged in it, she can think of nothing else; you must work a miracle to make her have so much as a good thought or give you a good word; she is grown so lumpish, you would think her whole spirit were resolved into flesh. And this may be the reason why the Holy Scripture so often compares men to beasts; as, to lions, foxes, and the like: because their souls become brutish, by following the dictates and motions of their sensual and animal appetites.

But you must observe, that all this happens while a soul is left to herself and her own natural strength; for when the Divine Goodness is pleased to furnish her with plenty of grace even in this world, as wicked as it is, this grace has such an ascendency over nature, and breathes such spirit and vigour into a soul, that she can wrestle with all difficulties and remove all obstacles, nay, though the body be borne down and sunk into the very centre of misery, yet can she still hold up her head, and steer her course towards Heaven.

Now, would you clearly see how the souls can at the same instant swim in a paradise of delights and yet be overwhelmed with the hellish torments of Purgatory? Cast your eyes upon the holy martyrs of God's Church, and observe their behaviour. They were torn, mangled, dismembered, flayed

alive, racked, broiled, burnt—and tell me, was not this to live in a kind of Hell? And yet, in the very height of their torments their hearts and souls were ready to leap for joy; you would have taken them to be already transported into Heaven. Hear them but speak for themselves. "O lovely Cross," cried out St. Andrew, "made beautiful by the precious Body of Christ, how long have I desired thee, and with what care have I sought thee! and now that I have found thee, receive me into thy arms, and lift me up to my dear Redeemer! O death,[1] how amiable art thou in my eyes, and how sweet is thy cruelty!" "Your coals," says St. Cecily, "your flaming firebrands, and all the terrors of death, are to me but as so many fragrant roses and lilies, sent from Heaven." "Shower down upon me," cried St. Stephen, "whole deluges of stones, whilst I see the heavens open and Jesus Christ standing at the right hand of His Eternal Father, to behold the fidelity of His champion." "Turn," exclaimed St. Laurence, "oh, turn the other side, thou cruel tyrant! this is already broiled, and cooked fit for thy palate. Oh, how well am I pleased to suffer this little purgatory for the love of my Saviour." "Make haste, O my soul," cried St. Agnes, "to cast thyself upon the bed of flames which thy dear Spouse has prepared for thee." "Oh," cried St. Felicitas, and the mother of the Machabees, "oh, that I had a thousand children, or a thousand lives, to sacrifice them all to my God. What a

[1] From the author's text, it seems doubtful whether this sentenc is to be attributed to St. Andrew or to St. Cæcilia.

pleasure it is to suffer for so good a cause!" "Welcome tyrants, tigers, lions," writes St. Ignatius the Martyr; "let all the torments that the devils can invent come upon me, so I may enjoy my Saviour. I am the wheat of Christ; oh, let me be ground with the lions' teeth. Now I begin indeed to be the disciple of Christ." "Oh, the happy stroke of a sword," might St. Paul well exclaim, "that no sooner cuts off my head, but it makes a breach for my soul to enter into Heaven. Let it be far from me to glory in anything but in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let all evils band against me, and let my body be never so overloaded with afflictions, the joy of my heart will be sure to have the mastery, and my soul will be still replenished with such heavenly consolations that no words, nor even thoughts, are able to express it."

You may imagine, then, that the souls, once unfettered from the body, may, together with their torments, be capable of great comforts and Divine favours, and break forth into resolute, heroical, and even supercelestial acts. The Holy Ghost tells us, that "the corruptible body is a load upon the soul, and the earthly habitation presseth down the mind that museth upon many things."[1] So that a soul, by the infirmities of the body, is violently kept from the free exercise of her functions; whereas, if the body were supple, pliable, and willing to follow the persuasions of a resolute and generous soul, or the inspirations with which she is plentifully supplied from above, what might we not be able to do, even

[1] Wisdom ix. 15.

in this life? Now, that which is not done here but by very few, who are looked upon as so many miracles and prodigies of men, is easily performed by those separate holy souls, who are in the very porch of Heaven, assured of their salvation. Lastly, would you have a most perfect exemplar and idea of this wonderful combination of joys and griefs in one single person? You may clearly see it in the most sacred Person of our Blessed Saviour, Who, in the midst of His bitter Passion, and in the very height of His Agony and extreme dereliction, when He not only seemed to have been abandoned by His Eternal Father, but had even abandoned and forsaken Himself, by miraculously withholding the superior part of His blessed Soul from relieving and assisting the inferior, yet even then had all the comforts of Heaven, and saw God face to face, and consequently was at the self-same time most happy by the fruition of the beatifical vision: and yet so oppressed with griefs, that He cried out Himself, "My Soul is sorrowful unto death;" and again, "O My God, alas! why hast Thou thus forsaken Me!" Conceive something like unto this of the souls in Purgatory, who are most miserably tormented, and yet replenished with heavenly comforts.

§ 2.—*Two grounds of their comforts; the double assurance they have: of their salvation and impeccability.*

The better to unfold you this riddle, I must tell you that possibly the most solid and powerful ground of their comfort is the assurance of their

eternal salvation, and that one day, when it shall please God, they shall have their part in the joys of Paradise. That which is the sorest affliction in this life unto the most refined souls, in the greatest torments, is the fear of offending God and making an unhappy end, for want of the gift of perseverance, of which none can be assured without a particular revelation; and so becoming the devil's martyrs, by purchasing one Hell with another. For, if an angel should come down from Heaven and give this infallible assurance unto an afflicted person, that undoubtedly he shall be saved, as being one of the choice number of the elect, certainly his very heart would leap for joy; nor would the severest usage, with death itself, and death represented in her most frightful and ghastly attire, seem cruel or irksome unto him, but exceeding welcome and pleasant. When Almighty God was pleased once to reveal unto St. Francis his eternal predestination, and to seal him, as it were, a deed of gift of Paradise, this seraph incarnate was so transported with an ecstasy of joy, and so ravished out of himself, that for eight days together he did nothing but go up and down, crying out: "Paradise, Paradise! O my soul, thou shalt have Paradise!" and had so quite lost all memory of eating, drinking, sleeping, suffering, living, dying, and all things else, as being inebriated with the sweet remembrance of that comfortable news of eternal bliss, that he was not at all sensible of any oppression of nature, nor seemed to be the least concerned for it. For, said he, what can anything else signify to me, since I am one day

to have Paradise, with all the delights of Heaven? Now, if we credit the holy Doctors of the Church, and best divines of the Christian world, the souls in Purgatory are most certain of their salvation.[1] For no sooner is the soul departed this life, but she is brought to a Particular Judgment, where she receives an award of her eternal state of glory or confusion; and from the mouth of God hears the irrevocable sentence from which there is no appeal, no civil request, no review of process, no writ of error: for this decree of God's justice must immediately be put in execution. They say, further, that in the same moment that a soul sees herself condemned to Purgatory, she sees also the precise time prescribed her to continue there, according to the ordinary course of God's justice. But whether she know also, by Divine revelation, who will pray for her, and what assistance in particular they will give her, or how much will be cut off of the time determined for her punishment, is a nicer question, which I purposely leave untouched for others to exercise their wits in, as they please: I make haste to take up the thread of my discourse that I was letting fall, in which I am to lay before your eyes the ineffable joys of the souls in Purgatory, when they seriously reflect upon the certainty of their salvation, and how soon they shall be drowned in the Divinity, and yet swim in an ocean of all heavenly comforts. When Jacob knew for certain that he was to have the fair Rachel, he was content to be espoused first to Lia, though she was blear-eyed and ill-favoured;

[1] Suarez, d. 47, sec. 3.

and, besides, a world of heats and colds, frights and fears, and fourteen years' toilsome service, seemed scarce an hour to him: so much was his heart enchanted with a holy love of his dearly beloved Rachel; and so true it is, that for the enjoyment of that which a soul loves in good earnest, she makes no reckoning of fire and flames and a thousand Purgatories. So that a soul that is confident of one day espousing Rachel, that is, the Church Triumphant, objects not to be first espoused to Lia, that is, the Church Suffering, with all the pains in Purgatory, so long as it shall please God; and fourteen years are unto her but as an hour, such is the excess of her love to Heaven. "Oh, with what a good heart do I drink up my tears," said the royal Prophet,[1] "when I remember I shall pass into the heavenly tabernacle! were I to make my passage thither through Hell itself, how willingly would I run that way?" And to the same tune cried out St. Chrysostom, with a masculine voice, and a heart which was all heart: "If I were to pass through a thousand Hells, so I might in the end of all meet with Paradise and my God, how pleasing would these Hells seem unto me!" And certainly there are infinite souls who would be ready to sign it with their heart-blood, that they would be willing to dwell in the flames of Purgatory till the Day of Judgment, upon condition of being sure of eternal glory at the last; for, believe it, they that know well the meaning of these four words, God, Eternity, Glory, and Security, cannot but have a moderate

[1] Psalm xli. 3, 4.

apprehension of Purgatory fire, be it never so hot and furious.

Another heavenly comfort which rejoices these happy souls in the midst of their torments, is an infallible and certain assurance which they have, that, although their pains be never so insupportable, yet shall they never offend God, neither mortally nor venially; nor show the least sign of impatience or indignation. A true lover of God understands this language; and, if he do not, he shall in a moment learn it in Purgatory, and find by experience that a soul there had rather be plunged into the deepest pit of Hell than be guilty of the least voluntary misdemeanour. So that, seeing herself to be grown impeccable, and that no evils can have the power to make her offend God, and that all impatience dies at the gates of Purgatory, from whence all sins and human failings are quite banished—O God, what a solid comfort must this needs be unto her! The greatest affliction that good people can have in the sufferings of this life, is the fear of offending God, or to think that the violence of their torments may make them subject to break out into a thousand foolish expressions, and to toss in their heads many foolish thoughts, filling their imaginations with a world of chimeras and idle fancies, or frightful objects; or, in a word, because they apprehend either death, or sin, or the loss of their merit and labour, or that God is angry with them. For grief, with the devil's help, strives to snatch out of our hands the victorious palm of our sufferings, or at least to make us stoop to

some frailties and imperfections, which embitter our hearts. And were it not for this just fear, Saints would not fear the greatest evils they can endure in this world. What a joy, then, must it be to these holy innocent souls, to see themselves become altogether impeccable! The reason of this is clear; because, the Particular Judgment being once over, the final sentence is also pronounced, and the soul is no longer in a capacity to merit or demerit, nor so much as to satisfy by any voluntary sufferings of her own, but only to submit to the sweet rigour of God's justice, Who has assigned such a proportion of pains, answerable to her demerits, and so to clear her conscience, and blot out the remainder of her frailties and impurities. Make haste[1] to do well before death, is the counsel of Almighty God; for the appointed time wherein to heap up treasures of justice and merits is, before you appear in Judgment; for after that, it will be too late. The very instant that a soul leaves the body, according to God's law, there is no more time for merit or demerit; and therefore the souls that are sent into Purgatory are most certain they shall never more commit the least sin that can be imagined. When St. Antony was so furiously assaulted with a whole rabble regiment of devils, he was not greatly daunted at their hideous shapes, terrible howlings, and rude blows; all his fear was of offending God: he apprehended more the strokes of impatience than all the wounds of Hell; he called upon Christ for help, and having obtained the favour of a personal visit, he made

[1] Eccles. ix. 10.

Him this loving complaint and sweet expostulation:

"O good Jesus! where were you, alas, where were you even now, my dear Saviour, when your enemies and mine conspired so cruelly against me? why came you no sooner to relieve me?" "I was here," replied Christ, "beholding thee, and preserving thy heart from sin." "If it be so," said the invincible hermit, "do but assure me this, that I shall not sin, and let Lucifer, with all his accursed crew and hellish power, nay, let all the world besides, band against me! Since my God stands by me, and will secure me from offending Him, I make nothing of all the rest. Pain is no more pain; Hell is no more a hell, but a mere paradise, since it helps me to gain Paradise, which is worthy to be purchased with a million of Hells."

§ 3.—*More grounds of comfort, arising from their voluntary suffering, their disinterested love of God, and exact conformity with His holy will.*

In the next place, take this most sweet and weighty consideration. An evil that is forced, and against one's will, is a true evil indeed; the constraint and violence it carries along with it, embitters it above measure, and renders it insupportable: whereas, if the evil be voluntary, it is a good evil, a lovely evil, an evil to be purchased at any price. Witness the holy martyrs of God's Church, who, when they voluntarily shed their blood, and with a good-will poured out their lives for God's cause, though at the cost of the most

inhuman torments imaginable, seemed to make but little reckoning of the smart of them, as you may observe by their conduct. For some of them would put back the worms that were crept out of their ulcerous sores, others kiss the burning coals, and, by way of honour, place them on their heads. This holy martyr embraces the gibbet, as if he took it to be an easy ladder, whereby to mount up straight into Heaven; another provokes tigers and lions to dismember him. This tender virgin leaps into the fire prepared for her, without staying for the executioner's help; another casts herself into the sea, to preserve herself pure. See the force of Christian resolution, which is steered by Divine maxims. They die, and smile at it; they seem to court death itself; they choose rather to be under the hands of a bloody executioner, who can at most bereave them of their lives, than in the power of the son of an Emperor, who may rob them of the lilies of their virginal integrity. Nothing can be grievous to him that acts vigorously and suffers voluntarily whatsoever falls in his way. This, then, is one of the souls' chief comforts in those fiery dungeons. They accept their pains, as from the hands of their loving Father, Who, out of His paternal care, makes choice of those rough instruments to polish and refine them, and so fit them for His presence. They look upon them as love-tokens sent from their Beloved, and esteem them rather as precious gifts of their loving Lord, than as cruel punishments inflicted by a severe enemy. They kiss the rod and the fatherly hand which makes use of it for their

sovereign good. When a surgeon makes a deep incision to let out the water of a dropsy; when he strikes his lancet into the arm; when he cuts off a gangrened member, the diseased person kisses the hand that made the wound, embraces the surgeon, though sprinkled with his blood, opens his mouth to give thanks, his purse to reward, his eyes to bathe in tears, and his very heart to love cordially this kind murderer, who has so cruelly mishandled him, to do him good, and to save his life. What, think you, is the language of these holy souls, these children of God, in the midst of their severest torments? "Sweet rigours of Heaven; loving cruelties! ah, why do you vouchsafe so to humble your greatness, to take the pains to purify us poor creatures, worthy of a thousand Hells? Oh, the profuse goodness of the Almighty, Who is pleased, with the tenderness of a loving Father, to chastise His wicked servants, and so to adopt them for His dear children! Was it necessary that Himself should take the trouble upon Him to stretch out the hand of His infinite justice, to purify such disloyal souls, far unworthy of a love so cordial? Oh, let Him burn, let Him strike, let Him thunder; it is but reason He should do so; for, since He is our Father, our Creator, our Redeemer, our dear All, the sole Object of our lives, howsoever He handles us, we shall still take it for a great favour, and esteem ourselves over-happy to be treated, though never so severely, by so good a hand. Have they not reason? Believe it, they experience it to be so sweet and so reasonable, nay, they

judge it so necessary for them, to suffer in these flames, that though they should discover a thousand gates open, and a free passage for them to fly out of Purgatory into Paradise, not so much as one soul would stir out before she had fully satisfied the Divine justice. Paradise would be to them a Purgatory, should they carry thither but the least blemish in the world. When Isaac saw the sword in Abraham's hand, ready to strike off his head, and reflected that he was to receive the deadly wound from the hands of his dear father, that good and virtuous young man could neither find tongue to plead for his life, nor feet to run away and decline the stroke, nor hands to defend himself, nor so much as eyes to deplore his sad misfortune; but was content to have a heart to love his good father, and a head to lose, and a life to sacrifice upon the altar of obedience: and he looked upon the fire which was prepared to destroy him, as the odoriferous flaming pile of the phœnix, wherein she is consumed, to rise again to a new and happy life. The holy souls that burn in the flames of Purgatory, are much better disposed to embrace whatsoever God shall ordain, than Isaac was in regard of his father.

But there is yet something of a higher nature to be said upon this point. We have all the reason in the world to believe that God, of His infinite goodness, inspires these holy souls with a thousand heavenly lights, and such ravishing thoughts, that they cannot but take themselves to be extremely happy: so happy that St. Catharine of Genoa

professed she had learnt of Almighty God that, excepting only the blessed Saints in Heaven, there were no joys comparable to those of the souls in Purgatory. For, said she, when they consider that they are in the hands of God, in a place deputed for them by His holy providence, and just where God would have them, it is not to be expressed what a sweetness they find in so loving a thought: and certainly they had infinitely rather be in Purgatory to comply with His Divine pleasure, than be in Paradise with violence to His justice, and a manifest breach of the ordinary laws of the house of God. I will say more, continued she: it cannot so much as steal into their thoughts to desire to be anywhere else than where they are. Seeing that God has so placed them, they are not at all troubled that others get out before them; and they are so absorbed in this profound meditation, of being at God's disposal, in the bosom of His sweet providence, that they cannot so much as dream of being anywhere else. So that, methinks, those kind expressions of Almighty God by His Prophets, to His chosen people, may be fitly applied to the unhappy and yet happy condition of these holy souls. Rejoice, My people, says the living God; for I swear unto you by Myself, that when you shall pass through flames of fire, they shall not hurt you: I shall be there with you; I shall take off the edge, and blunt the points, of those piercing flames. I will raise the bright Aurora in your darkness; and the darkness of your nights shall outshine the mid-day. I will pour out My peace into the midst

of your hearts, and replenish your souls with the bright shining lights of Heaven. You shall be as a paradise of delights, bedewed with a living fountain of heavenly waters. You shall rejoice in your Creator, and I will raise you above the height of mountains, and nourish you with manna and the sweet inheritance of Jacob; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoke it: and it cannot fail, but shall be sure to fall out so, because He hath spoken it.

Did we truly know what is the pure love of God, a love without interest, and a heart that neither has nor will have any other ends, feelings, or designs, but those of Almighty God, haply we might be able to conceive a good part of the paradise of the souls in Purgatory. Those holy souls see so clearly, how much it imports them to have no other concern or interest but for God's cause, that without the least regard to their own sufferings, they had infinitely rather dwell in Purgatory, since God will have it so, than be surrounded with the sweets of Paradise, without God's good pleasure: nay, more, though they had not the least blemish to wipe out, and the only question were to comply with God's blessed will, Who, for some reason best known to Himself, were pleased to treat them in this severe fashion. This pure love, without all self-interest, is more forcible than any other consideration. For, if St. Paul could wish himself accursed for his brethren, if Moses could have been content to be blotted out of the Book of Life for the sake of God's people, if others have offered themselves to remain in Purgatory till Doomsday, to have the

assurance of their own salvation, or to suffer for the good of others; and all this, either out of a kind of self-love, or an excess of fraternal charity, and while they were yet entangled with the apprehensions of this wicked world; what may not a soul do which is full of Divine love, without any mixture of self-interest, so purely refined as not to desire anything but God and the execution of His inscrutable designs? And since all holy souls are of this temper in the other world, I am confident there is not any one soul that would quit Purgatory, where God has placed her, nor any that would not most willingly exchange Heaven for Purgatory, should she discover the least inclination of God's will that it should be so. The Saints are much perfecter than mortal men; who, notwithstanding all the weakness of frail nature, could have the heart to cast themselves into burning flames, when they saw it made for God's greater glory, and could there sing out His praises. So happy did they account themselves to have the power of serving God, without any other interest than that of His glory, nay, with the ruin of their very lives and all other worldly concerns. And when they had done all this, they would break out into tears; as the most eloquent, though silent, expression of a favour they never took themselves to deserve. Wherefore, since all the souls in Purgatory have not only a perfect, but also an experimental, knowledge of this pure love, and withal see such a world of devout souls, who are still pouring themselves out into such heroical acts of pure love, how much,

think you, does this encourage them to do their best in this kind? And can you think, after all this, that God will suffer Himself to be outdone in courtesy or charity, and not be still furnishing them with a fresh supply of new lights and celestial comforts? And certainly the attractions of Almighty God are not to be numbered amongst His least favours. They do so transport a soul, and so absolutely master her, that she neither feels nor cares for all the torments in the world which the body suffers while she is thus absorbed, and even lost, as it were, in Almighty God. They applied caustics to St. Thomas of Aquin while he was rapt in his profound speculations of divinity, and he seemed not to feel the least smart, or at least took no notice of it: he was so ravished and drowned in Almighty God. They tell the same of the seraphical St. Francis; how, when he was once gone out of himself with an ardent affection of the love of Jesus Christ, they applied the button cautery, and the good Saint felt it no more than if it had been a button of glass or crystal. Many other servants of God, in their ecstatical raptures and lofty meditations of the joys of Heaven, have been pricked with needles, wounded with lances, and persecuted with rude blows, cold water, hot irons, and the like: and yet, for all this, could not be drawn out of their sweet quiet and repose, to give the least attention to these rough entertainments. What shall we say now of those fair souls, lately flown out of their bodies, who are so forcibly carried away with the pure love of God and His

eternal glory, who see themselves so near it, and so certain to enjoy it, and to be swallowed up in the immense ocean of the Divinity? "If only my son may be one day Emperor of Rome," said the ambitious Agrippina, "I shall most readily consent to be, soon after, thrown headlong into the bottomless sea." And do you think those souls, who are most certain to reign for ever in the empyrean Heaven, can complain of the fire wherewith they are tormented for a few hours, or years, which are but so many moments compared with eternity? St. Catharine of Genoa assures us, that God does so violently, and withal so sweetly, attract and draw after Him these happy souls, that it is impossible to find out words to express it, or any parallel to this sweet and loving violence.

This pure love which the souls have for Almighty God goes not without a perfect conformity to His Divine will. And this is the thing which of all others metamorphoses Purgatory into Paradise. To have the same will with Almighty God, says holy St. Bernard,[1] is to be like God; but not to have the power to have any other but God's is to be what God is, that is, content and happy in whatever condition. If God, for some special reason, would have a soul to be a million of years in Purgatory, without fault, and without hope of any further merit, neither the extremity of the pains, nor the length of the delay, would rob her of that perfect resignation to God's holy will.

Can there be any doubt of this, when we find

[1] St. Bernard, *Epist. ad Fr. de Monte Dei.*

souls, even in this miserable life, so courageous and so conformable to the Divine pleasure, as to offer themselves to be buried in hell-fire, if only it might but add one single grain of increase to God's glory? No; this dei-formity, or uniformity to the designs of God's providence, is so excessive great in these devout souls, so vigorous and so puissant, that it cannot be expressed or conceived in this our gross ignorant world. The Ecclesiastical History[1] assures us that many of the holy martyrs, whilst they were in flames of fire, melting off their lives by drops, as I may so say, were heard to profess with a smiling countenance and an invincible heart, that they took themselves to be at a nuptial feast, and to tread upon roses. So well were they pleased that God was so pleased, and that His blessed will was performed in them; nay, more: that nothing grieved them but the shortness of their torments and the fleeting condition of their petty martyrdoms, as they would call them. "Ah," would they say, "were this to last to the world's end, how happy were we, and how welcome were our flames!" by the light whereof one might clearly read the fidelity of their hearts and their conformity to the Heart of the great God of Heaven.

This excessive conformity and fidelity of these holy souls makes them willing to co-operate with the sweet rigours of God's justice against their crimes. He who loves God purely for Himself, loves all that belongs to make up His glory; and since God shows Himself as much God in the

[1] Euseb. Niceph. Baron.

exercise of His justice as in the sweet influences of His boundless mercy, a happy soul cannot choose but take pleasure to co-operate with God's justice in procuring His satisfaction, even at the charge of her own sufferings; and would most readily annihilate herself for the honour of her God. "If our hour be come," said the valorous Judas Macchabeus, "and if God have so disposed of us, let us die, my brethren, and let us die bravely: it must be as the heavens have decreed, and I will have it so, though at the cost of a hundred thousand lives." And holy Job: "Is it not reason," said he, "that we should as well receive what we call evils at the hand of His justice, as favours at the hand of His mercy?" That noble Roman that buried his poniard in his own sister's breast, whom he met foolishly bewailing the good fortune of the city of Rome, had nothing to allege for his justification but this—"What," said he, "shall not Rome be Rome, as well in the exercise of rigorous justice as in the maintenance of her greatness and demonstration of her absolute power? Can I offer a more pleasing holocaust unto the gods than to sacrifice my sister, when Rome's justice requires it?" This Roman severity carries with it I know not what masculine generosity; and this cruelty to a foolish sister argues much piety to his dear country. And so the holy souls, that burn with ardent charity, seeing it necessary that the Divine justice should receive plenary satisfaction, and that God's interest is extraordinarily concerned that His justice should rule by course, as well as His mercy, goodness, and

charity; these holy souls, I say, seeing all this, have such a pleasure in their torments as cannot be comprehended in this miserable life, which is so full of self-love, except by some few noble and generous souls that love God only for Himself, and that so purely as not to make any reckoning of their own concerns or sufferings.

§ 4.—*Another comfortable consideration, drawn from the desire they have to make themselves worthy of the sight of God.*

Take another consideration, which will much illustrate that which has been already said, and reinforce the joy of the souls, in spite of their tormenting pains. You may believe that a soul, having once taken leave of the body, has such a passionate inclination to enjoy her end, that is, to see God and to be united with God, and finally to arrive unto that happiness for which she clearly sees she was created, that it can hardly be expressed. A bird newly stolen out of the cage wherein she was detained captive, flies not away swifter; the furious course of a torrent that precipitates itself from the top of a mountain, rolls not along with a greater impetuosity; the enraged winds broken loose out of their close caverns underground, blow not with more violence than the desire of seeing God thrusts on a soul once freed from the thraldom of the body.

Now, as they see in Purgatory that there is no other obstacle but the rust and filth of sin, and the remainder of their former misdemeanours, and that

Purgatory fire is deputed by Almighty God to purify and refine them, and so to make them worthy of His presence, they are so far from grumbling or repining at this sweet rigour of God's justice, that, on the contrary, they take it for a greater favour and an extraordinary piece of mercy of Almighty God, their most loving Father. When they sawed off the leg of that great philosopher, he held it out with both his hands, he encouraged the operator, and perhaps also took hold of the saw himself, to do the surgeon that piece of service, saying withal: "Let us thrust, my friend, let us thrust, and let us not fear to cut off this rotten and useless bone: the pain you give me will do me a great deal of good, and the sooner we have it done the better. Be not afraid, then, my dear enemy; but strike in thy saw boldly: the crueller thou art for the time, the sooner thou wilt put me out of pain." And thus the surgeon cut off his leg with as little sense or feeling as if it had been the leg of a statue, or of a person that had no relation to him, or was his mortal enemy. And that Japonian virgin,[1] who was to die by fire, could not refrain from kissing the burning coals, and crying out joyfully: "O lovely coals, O delicious flames, how much I am obliged to your sweet cruelty, since you put me in a condition of enjoying, within a few moments, the only Spouse of my soul!" Oh, the souls in Purgatory say the same with a far greater ardour of love. And I venture to say more yet: that they have such a longing desire to co-operate with God

[1] *Hist. Japan.*

in their own purification, and to render themselves capable of the beatifical vision, that, if it were in their power to heighten the rigour of their torments, it would be the first thing they would do, to advance their eternal felicity. And with reason; for if we were, says St. Austin,[1] to take the pains of Hell in our way to see God in His glory, we ought to suffer them with a good heart, for a good so great, that whatsoever it costs, it can never be too dear. Think well on these words, good reader: "Let God cost never so much, He cannot be too dear."

St. Catharine of Genoa was heard to say, she believed that the greatest pains which the souls have in Purgatory is to see they have an obstacle within themselves, and some few blemishes, which hinder them for the time from enjoying the sight of their Creator: insomuch that their spite and anger is not so much against the flames, though never so biting, as against these unhappy blemishes and loathsome remainder of their sins. Nay, they are, in a manner, in love with the fire, which by little and little helps to free them from this cruel pain; and they do like the patient who kisses the razor that is to cut out whole slices of putrified flesh from a gangrene or mortal ulcer, which would otherwise insensibly bereave him of his life if that fierce remedy were not applied.

[1] Serm. 2. in Fest. Omn. Sanct.

§ 5.—*Their suffering without merit, and the free exercise of their virtues without impediment, are to them special motives of comfort.*

What a pleasure, think you, is it to suffer, or indeed to exercise any virtuous act, merely for the virtue itself, without casting about for any further recompense than barely the doing what is pleasing to Him we love, and Who loves us out of His pure bounty, without any desert of ours! A Roman lady, understanding that Cæsar had condemned her dear husband Pætus to stab himself, snatched up the dagger first herself, and struck it deep into her breast; and then, with a smiling but dying look, spoke thus to him: My dearest, this stab has done me no harm at all, upon my honour, it has not; but alas! the stab you are going to give yourself, it is that which bereaves me of my life: and with that, she gave up the ghost. Those holy and loving souls, calling to mind how Christ died for them, to pay the ransom of their sins, without looking for any return by way of recompense, out of His pure charity and obedience to His Father, they would most willingly sacrifice themselves for His glory, in satisfaction of justice and imitation of His charity; and they scarce feel their pains when they compare them with those of their dear Redeemer. We can, indeed, scarce apprehend this joy, we that are so selfish as to relish nothing but earthly things, whose hearts are so wedded to our own interests, and so apprehensive of pain. Yet have the patience to listen to the pathetical

expressions of a man even during this life, who certainly was not without his heavenly relishes, but could make a shift to find out a paradise even in the purgatory of the sufferings of a miserable life. You will soon discover, by his golden eloquence, who it is that speaks. "Had I the choice to be an apostle, prophet, doctor, nay more, an angel and potentate of Heaven; were it in my power to be metamorphosed into one of the Cherubim or Seraphim, and to be raised above their thrones; in a word, to be seated at the right hand of God; or else to be thrown into a dark, loathsome, and subterraneous dungeon, there to be manacled, fettered, and grievously tormented, for the sole love of my Saviour Jesus Christ, in company with the glorious Apostle St. Paul: without all hesitation or doubt I should choose to be there with St. Paul, and should prefer it before the joys of Heaven."[1] How do you feel your hearts, when you hear this kind of language? And what think you? May not the souls in Purgatory have the like affections, and more heroical, if there can be anything thought of more heroical than to quit Heaven for Purgatory, and to leave God for God; sacrificing themselves entirely to His glory, as a perfect holocaust, to please His Divine will, and appease the sweet rigours of His justice?

Blessed Father Francis Borgia was wont to say, he would willingly go to Purgatory, and lie frying there to the end of the world, to heap up a new treasure of grace and glory, and to become a greater

[1] St. Chrysostom, Hom. 8, in c. 4. Ephes.

Saint in Heaven, and a more acceptable servant to His Divine Majesty. In earnest, this was an act of a noble heart and purified soul, aspiring to the highest pitch of perfection. The holy man took it for a most incomparable satisfaction to see himself every moment to go on increasing in virtue, and heaping up graces upon graces, and at the last to purchase so high a place in the Kingdom of Heaven as not to have cause to envy the highest Seraphim. And yet, methinks, if I may have leave to vent my own thoughts, there is something of a holy kind of self-interest in this point of perfection; holy, I say, but withal, interest. But why may we not believe that those holy captive souls fly higher, and offer themselves to God to suffer there for one another, out of a Divine kind of civility and generous act of fraternal charity? For in this world there have been mothers who have chosen rather to die themselves than see their dear children die before them. There have been also souls, as I have touched elsewhere, who have wished to be damned (always understanding that it were without sin), to save others; and this without hope of grace, or glory, merely in obedience to perfect charity. And why should we make such a wonder of it, since the very tigress, who has no heart but what is made up of cruelty, has nevertheless love enough to cast herself into flames, if she find no other expedient to save her young ones? Can we believe that brutes have more love, and mortal men more charity and courage, than the holy souls of Purgatory have for the love of God, and of those

souls they passionately love? O sweet Purgatory, O loving flames of charity, and pure transcendent charity, worthy of the souls which are so pure! The holy servant of God meant this, when she said that the souls are wholly despoiled of all self-interest, and do wholly devote themselves to God's interest: and that out of pure charity.

We should soon see wonders in ourselves, would we but give way to our virtues and those Divine graces which are hourly showered down upon our souls from Heaven, to work according to the full extent of their energy and power. But, alas! an infirm body, much passion, a faint heart, with a thousand other obstacles in this life, make us to do scarce half what we are able. And divines are of opinion that, beside the Mother of God, there hath hardly been one, amongst all other pure creatures, who has acted according to the full latitude of his power, and those gracious helps sent him from Heaven. Others, indeed, have sometimes made valiant attempts, but it was, as it were, but in a bravado and by spurts, and they came off but poorly and failed in their designs. But the souls in Purgatory, who are as it were new minted, and cast into a pure spiritual substance, free from the body and all corporal and human infirmities, nor are at all impeded by their torments from the free exercise of all the powers of their souls: they, I say, give full scope and liberty to all the choirs of virtues to play their parts, and suffer grace to have her entire effect; and this doubtless affords them such unspeakable comforts and advantages

as cannot well be expressed in this mortal life. Oh, what ejaculations of their pure love! what submissions of their profound humility! what conformities of their wills! what submissive obedience to the holy decrees of God's justice! what fidelity and justice to satisfy the rigour of God's justice for all they owe Him! what passionate desire of purity, to see themselves without blemish or hindrance from enjoying God! what incredible tenderness towards God, Who treats them so sweetly in comparison of their ingratitude and infidelity! what excess of joy to see themselves within two fingers' breadth, as it were, of Paradise! In fine, what a paradise of virtues, what Divine endeavours of these happy souls, what attractions of Almighty God and heavenly allurements! Who can worthily comprehend such a medley of so sweet a paradise in Purgatory, so cruelly sweet and so lovingly bitter? And now I understand why St. Catharine said, that in case the souls did not meet with Purgatory, it would be a kind of hell to them to want the help of those purging flames to cancel out the blemishes of their sins, and make them worthy to see God. I have not told you what ejaculatory prayers they make, what sweet aspirations they breathe out, and what flaming darts of love they shoot up to the Heart of God. For if the martyrs, in the greatest extremity of their torments, could cast out such gentle sighs, and break into such Divine and loving speeches as to draw tears to the eyes of the hangman or tyrant, what will not these holy souls do, since they have scarce any sweeter entertain-

ment than to converse with God and implore His mercy? The afflictions and sufferings of the body, says Salvian,[1] cannot hinder the paradise of the soul and her interior sweetness; much less, when the soul is in the other world.

§ 6.—*They joy in the continual decrease of their pains, and influence of pure heavenly consolations.*

The fire of love works more sensibly with them than their tormenting flames. The natural instinct they have to be with God, and their longing thirst to take their fill of those inebriating joys, while they see themselves forcibly detained and bound fast to so base an element of fire, is a torment beyond expression. St. Ambrose[2] maintains that the fire of love which had seized on St. Laurence's heart was more active than that which consumed his flesh and melted the very marrow of his bones. Wherefore it must needs be great comfort unto these sweet souls to see that their sufferings are every moment diminished; if not otherwise, at least forasmuch as concerns the prefixed time of their durance, which goes lessening itself more and more as it draws nearer to an end. And, according to the probable opinion of holy men, the intensity of the pain itself is perpetually decreased, according to the fresh supplies of succour which the Church Militant never fails to administer unto them, by her prayers and Sacrifices: since there is not an hour, neither day nor night, when there is not Mass said or some devout prayers offered up, in some part of

[1] *Lib. de Provid.* [2] St. Ambrose, Serm. i.

the Christian world. Besides, St. Catharine tells us that God also grows still more and more liberal in showering down His heavenly sweet favours and gracious influences upon these wretched and yet happy souls. There was a young woman had lived with her husband with so much chaste love, that she was not more tender of her own life: and, seeing him one day laid dead upon a burning pile, and having a long time in vain cast about how she might come to him, at length threw herself just upon his heart, and so chose willingly to die with him and mingle her ashes with his. And who doubts but that the Guardian Angels, those eagles of Paradise, seeing the souls of their pupils, for whom they had so much tenderness and care in this life, to lie burning in scorching flames, often cast themselves in to comfort them; and, if not release them, at least entertain them with such pleasing discourses as take off much of the sense of their bitter torments? When the King asked Daniel whether the lions had not devoured him, and whether his God had power to preserve him from that inevitable death, he answered: Yes, sir, my God has sent His Angel, who is come down from Heaven to protect me, and has tied up the mouths of the hungry lions, who have not offered to touch me: nor had I ever so much comfort in my whole life as in this place of death and despair; for Paradise is everywhere where God and His Angels are. The same happened to those three innocent young men, who had leisure to sing in the middle of a burning furnace, which, from being a kind of

Purgatory was become a terrestrial Paradise, or an empyrean Heaven. This being so, and the goodness of God comforting the souls with a world of good thoughts, you must know that Purgatory seems a great mercy to them; and so much the greater by how much they see clearly the vast difference between this condition of theirs and that of the damned souls; and what an unspeakable favour God has done them, to dispose things so sweetly that they might be conveyed into Purgatory, when they so often deserved to be thrust into hell-fire; and possibly more than many of the damned souls: since there are certainly some damned but for one or two mortal sins, whereas they may know themselves to have committed thousands. And who knows, then, whether in their ecstasies of love they may not cry out with holy St. Gregory: "O my God, increase my griefs; alas! I have deserved far more; but withal be pleased, I beseech Thee, to remember in Thy mercy to increase also my courage and to fortify my patience."

Nothing, surely, is comparable to pure heavenly consolations. When all creatures are wanting, and all other worldly satisfactions eclipsed from our hearts, so that we remain in pure sufferance, and taste nothing but God alone, then it is, say the mystical divines, that we possess the joy of all joys, and the quintessence of all true and solid comfort. "God has done us the honour," says St. Paul, "to make us sit by His Divine Majesty, and, as it were, side by side to His Son Jesus Christ;" a favour that has so ravished my soul, that I cannot

think on it without incredible joy. "Where, do you imagine, was St. Paul," says St. Chrysostom, "when he spoke this? For my part, I believe he was lying in a dungeon, in irons, neck and heels together, forsaken of all the world; and that it was in this general abandonment that he was surprised with those ravishing joys of Heaven, and had such a feeling of God's greatness, that he seemed to be already seated at His right hand." "When, think you," says St. Thomas, "was he rapt up into the third Heaven? I am apt to believe that it was at his conversion, when, despoiled of all worldly comforts, and all things failing him at once, Almighty God snatched up his soul into Heaven, and gave him a sweet relish of the delights of Paradise." What shall I say then of the souls who, seeing themselves besieged with fire and torments, and a thousand martyrdoms, and having no human consolation, are put upon a sweet necessity to have their recourse unto God, and to seek their contentment in Him alone? Oh, what fervent aspirations, what holy ecstasies, what cordial oblations, what Divine acts of conformity! How lovingly doth God and His Angels inspire them! what pure lights and affections do they instil! Hear the Prophet David: "According to the multitude of my bitter griefs, your consolations, O my God, have rejoiced my heart." And St. Paul: "When I am oppressed with evils, then it is that my soul swims in celestial joys, and that I am as it were all candied with sweetness." And the Prophet Isaias: "In the greatest of your furies, in the severest rigour of

anger, O my Lord, you have cast out some rays of your sweet mercies, and have ravished me with admiration." Now, though all this be said of this mortal life, yet may we in some proportion give a guess by it how it fares with the holy souls in Purgatory; and the rather, because a soul once severed from the body, has much more liberty to produce its acts, and to couple an excess of torments with an excess of joys: since the same, in some sort, has been seen to have happened in this life. Have you ever read in St. Austin, that if a drop of the heavenly torrent should fall into Hell, Hell would no longer seem to be Hell, but a kind of Heaven? Now, certainly, the Divine Goodness lets fall some of those drops into Purgatory; nor are the Angels sparing, but rather prodigal, in showering them down upon souls who are to be exalted into Heaven, as high as themselves, and possibly more.

But let not this discourse cool your charity, lest, seeing the souls enjoy so much comfort in Purgatory, your compassion for them grow slack, and so continue not equal to their desert. Remember then, that notwithstanding all these comforts here rehearsed, the poor creatures cease not to be grievously tormented; and consequently have extreme need of all your favourable assistance and pious endeavours. When Christ Jesus was in His bitter Agony, sweating blood and water, the superior part of His Soul enjoyed God and His glory, and yet His Body was so oppressed with sorrow, that He was ready to die, and was content to be

comforted by an Angel. In like manner, these holy souls have indeed great joys; but feel withal such bitter torments, that they stand in great need of our help. So that you will much wrong them, and me too, to stand musing so long upon their joys, as not to afford them succour. Let us then here break off this discourse, and pass on to consider what assistance we owe and they expect of our charity; and first, let us see what a charity it is to help them.

THE THIRD SURVEY.

THAT THERE IS NOT IN THIS WORLD A MORE EMINENT OR PRUDENT ACT OF FRATERNAL CHARITY, THAN TO HELP THE SOULS IN PURGATORY.

THE Divine Apostle, the very disciple of Paradise and doctor of the universe, reads us this lesson: that the highest point of Christian perfection consists in charity. The abridgment of the Decalogue, the epitome of the whole Bible, the quintessence of all virtues, is finally reduced to this sole point of Divine love. Now, fraternal charity, or the love of our neighbour, is cousin-german to the love of God; and upon these two holy loves, as upon the two poles of the world, moves the heaven of all perfections. They are the two angels that keep sentinel at the gates of Paradise;[1] the two Cherubim that cover the Ark, where the manna of the felicity of this life is contained.[2] They are the two eyes of the spouse of the soul, which wound, as it were, the Heart of God, and pierce it so deeply with their Divine glances, that He cries out in the Canticles,[3] that they have stolen away His Heart. "Alas," says He, "Thou hast wounded My Heart, My beloved, and hast robbed Me of it;" so powerful are the beauteous charms of this heavenly charity.

[1] Genesis iii. 24. [2] 3 Kings viii. 7. [3] Cant. iv. 9.

The more power the love of God has in us, the greater is the ardour of fraternal charity, which burns the very heart of our souls, and, like the phœnix, takes delight to live and die in so noble a fire, and to consume in such health-giving and yet murderous flames.

My design here is, not to treat of the love of God, but only to suppose that the more one loves God, the more he loves and desires to help his neighbour: and to believe that a man loves God without doing his uttermost to assist his neighbour in the way of charity, is to fool himself point-blank. Would you know how much you love God? Look with what courage you are wont to serve your neighbour; for otherwise, your charity is not fire but smoke, and your affections are not Divine love, but empty air, or a mere natural love; or, in a word, self-love, or rather an empty shadow, or fantastical appearance of Divine love. He that loveth not his neighbour whom he daily sees with both his eyes, says St. John,[1] how can he make us believe that he loves God, Whom he never saw?

What I maintain is, that amongst all the acts of fraternal charity or works of mercy, the most sublime, the most pure, and the most advantageous of all others, is the service we perform for the souls in Purgatory.

In the history of the incomparable Order of the great St. Dominic, it is authentically related that one of the first of those holy religious men was wont to say, that he found himself not so much concerned

[1] 1 St. John iv. 20.

to pray for the souls in Purgatory, because they are certain of their salvation; and that upon this account we ought not, in his judgment, to be very solicitous for them, but ought rather to bend our whole care to help sinners, to convert the wicked, and to secure such souls as are uncertain of their salvation, and probably certain of their damnation, as leading very evil lives. Here it is, said he, it is here that I willingly employ my whole endeavours. It is upon these that I bestow my Masses and prayers, and all that little that is at my disposal; and thus I take it to be well bestowed. But upon souls that have an assurance of eternal happiness, and can never more lose God or offend Him, I believe not, said he, that one ought to be so solicitous. This certainly was but a poor and weak discourse, to give it no severer a censure; and the consequence of it was this, that the good man did not only himself forbear to help these poor souls, but, which was worse, dissuaded others from doing it; and under colour of a greater charity, withdrew that succour which otherwise good people would liberally have afforded them. But God took their cause in hand; for permitting the souls to appear and show themselves in frightful shapes, and to haunt the good man by night and day without respite, still filling his fancy with dreadful imaginations and his eyes with terrible spectacles, and withal letting him know who they were, and why with God's permission they so importuned him with their troublesome visits, you may believe the good Father became so affectionately kind to the souls in

Purgatory, bestowed so many Masses and prayers upon them, preached so fervently in their behalf, stirred up so many to the same devotion, that it is a thing incredible to believe, and not to be expressed with eloquence. Never did you see so many and so clear and convincing reasons as he alleged, to demonstrate that it is the most eminent piece of fraternal charity in this life to pray for the souls departed. Love and fear are the two most excellent orators in the world: they can teach all rhetoric in a moment, and infuse a most miraculous eloquence. This good Father, who thought he should have been frightened to death, was grown so fearful of a second assault, that he bent his whole understanding to invent the most pressing and convincing arguments to stir up the world both to pity and to piety, and so persuade souls to help souls: and it is incredible what good ensued thereupon. The history does not set down the motives which he either invented, or had by inspiration, to evidence this truth; and therefore I will borrow them of St. Thomas, that angel of divinity, of the same Order, and of other Saints and Doctors of the Catholic Church.

§ 1.—*The greatness of the charity to the souls in Purgatory is argued from the greatness of their pains and their helpless condition.*

Since there is no torment under heaven comparable to the pains of Purgatory, as we have already seen, those unhappy souls must needs be the most afflicted creatures in the world; and consequently there cannot be a greater charity than to

relieve them. The loving mother runs always to her sickliest child: not but that she is tender of them all, and has her heart divided into as many parcels as she has children, and sick children; but where there is most need, there she makes a greater demonstration of her love; thither her heart is carried with a greater violence and tenderness of affection, where the greatest evil or danger appears. As for the rest, their condition is not so pressing; she speaks to them at leisure, and by giving one of them a few comfits, a good word to another, a smile to a third, they are all well contented. But he that burns in the Purgatory of a violent fever, it is he that hath most need of his mother: and so you see her, as it were, nailed to his pillow, her heart, her eyes, her hands, her mouth, and her very bosom lie open to this child, and she can think of nothing but him: so that where there is a greater share of misery, reason requires there should be more compassion and more charity expressed. Cast but a morsel of bread to a needy beggar, send a good alms to a needy hospital, visit a prisoner, give a word of comfort to a sick person, and they are very well satisfied. But he that lies burning in unmerciful flames, ah, it is he that ought to move all the bowels of your compassion. When the image of Cleopatra, with the stinging asps at her breasts, was carried in triumph before the Romans, though otherwise fierce and cruel enough by nature, yet could they not hold from shedding a few tears of compassion. The other captives, yet living, did not move them at all, in comparison of that unfor-

tunate Princess, though she was only represented in colours upon a painted cloth. You angel-keepers of Purgatory, I conjure you to unlock your gates and lay your prison open, that I may discover those kings and queens, I mean those holy souls of both sexes, who are shortly to have their share in the heavenly kingdom; that I may lay before the eyes of the whole Catholic Church those asps of grief, that lie so close at their breasts; those cruel flames, I mean, that incessantly devour them, and at the same time the infinite modesty and patience with which they endure all; insomuch that not one of them lets fall the least froward or inconsiderate word, or makes the least complaint against the sweet rigour of God. Is there a heart, if it be the heart of a man indeed, and has but a drop of true Christian blood in it, that does not feel itself to be either broken or softened at so lamentable a spectacle; to see, I say, such noble and generous spirits in so deplorable a condition? Is there anything within the whole circumference of the universe so worthy of compassion and that may so deservedly claim the greatest share in all your devotions and charities, as to see our fathers, our mothers, our nearest and dearest relations, to lie broiling in cruel flames, and to cry to us for help with tears that are able to move cruelty itself? Whence I conclude, there is not upon the earth any object that deserves more commiseration than this, nor where fraternal charity can better employ all her forces.

Next to the grievousness of their pains, there is not anything can so enlarge your charity to

deceased souls as the nature of their condition, wherein they can neither help themselves nor one another. For there is no more time for merit: alas, no; nor any way left them to solace themselves in the least degree, but merely to suffer patiently the sweet rigours of the Divine justice. Here upon earth, there is not a creature so wretched but can both help himself and receive help of others. At least, he has his comfort, that he merits Heaven by his sufferings, and that his patience will prepare him a crown of glory. He may exercise a thousand acts of virtue, which are as many degrees of grace and glory, if he do them as he ought. He makes a virtue of necessity, by embracing that voluntarily which he cannot avoid; and glories in this, that he can imitate his Saviour Jesus Christ. Whereas, the souls can receive no comfort by meriting, which is the comfort of comforts in this life: whence I conclude, that our charity to them cannot be better employed.

When our Blessed Saviour saw that poor creature, and heard him say that he had lain there perishing at the pond-side for the space of thirty-eight years, for want of a man to help him in, it went to the very Heart of sweet Jesus; and, presently forsaking all others, He cured this poor impotent creature, and wrought that famous miracle in favour of this helpless wretch, forsaken of the whole world besides. And certainly, this was a case of great commiseration; but nothing comparable to the case we treat of. For those that are yet living, though never so miserable, have a

thousand tricks and devices to shift and help themselves in their miseries; but the poor souls, alas! have no way left them to decline or sweeten their martyrdom. Pliny reports that an eagle, seeing, one day, the young maid his dear mistress, who had cherished him in her bosom, laid on a burning wood-pile, was so struck at the sight, what with love and what with compassion, that he immediately took wing and launched into the burning flames to deliver her. Good God! shall savage beasts, and that tyrant of the air, have more pity of a dead carcass, that feels nothing, than we have of immortal souls, who have so great a feeling of insupportable torments? Your Indian women use to hold it for a great honour to throw themselves into the flames to their dead husbands, and so to join souls and ashes together. And shall it be said that a natural love is more daring than a supernatural; and that these Indian women have more love for the dead carcasses of their husbands than we have for the precious souls of our fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, and others, who are most worthy of incomparable love?

§ 2.—*Our charity for the souls departed is preferred before all other works of mercy.*

You shall be judge yourself, you that read this. If God at the same instant should put you both in Purgatory and in a common gaol, as it is most easy for Him to do; I conjure you to tell me, in which of the two places would you desire to be first

relieved? And ought you not to do that for others which you would have them to do for you?

Besides, the spiritual works of mercy are of a higher rank than those that are corporal; as St. Thomas proves excellently well. Is it not, then, a more noble piece of charity to relieve souls than bodies; to stretch out your hand, I say, to help a poor soul out of scorching flames, than to comfort a sick person that feels but a little heat of a fever, and may have a thousand sweets and refreshments?

Again; when you bestow an alms on a poor body, 'tis true, you can never do amiss, if you look only on God; but you may often fail of your aim, and lose both your money and your labour, if you consider the men themselves; who for the most part are ungrateful, deceitful, wicked, and so far unsatisfied, that you have never done with them. Do them a thousand good turns; if you fail but once, all is lost; they do nothing but grumble and repine: they quite forget all the good they have so plentifully received from your accustomed liberality; they take notice of nothing but what you have omitted. They believe all is no more than their due; they are as insolent as if you were always bound to do for them. To say nothing, that they often abuse your charity, and serve themselves of your gracious benevolences to offend both God and man; as being notorious gluttons, drunkards, blasphemers, and abominable villains, both for body and soul.

But the good you do for souls, so beautiful, so

noble, and so holy, besides the reward you shall be sure to receive from God, it is not to be imagined how well it is bestowed, and how grateful they are for it. There is nothing lost, though you give ever so little: they take themselves to be infinitely obliged for your charity, they never forget it, they never complain, they never turn ungrateful. Certainly, it must needs be an unspeakable advantage to you, to be assured that the good you do is for a happy soul, though unhappy for the time; for a Saint that is ready to be canonized in Heaven, and, perchance, after a few more moments of pain, shall be a greater Saint there than many whose feasts we keep with great solemnity! Besides, it cannot but be an excessive comfort to oblige a soul which loves God with all its strength, and which will soon lodge in His very Heart. Lastly, what an honour must it be thus to contribute to the glory of so happy a soul, who within a while shall be brighter than the sun and a companion to the Angels, and shall exercise a world of most sublime acts of virtue, of thanksgiving to God, fraternal charity, and the like! And if you chance to go yourself into Pugatory, before they are released, you will be exceedingly rejoiced to see what a grateful remembrance they have of your charity, and would not, for all the treasures in the world, but have done that little you have done for them; and you will scarce have a more sensible feeling for anything, than for having lost so many occasions of relieving so many poor souls in their grievous torments.

Our Blessed Saviour tells us, whosoever bestows a charity on a disciple, or on a prophet, shall be sure to have the reward of a disciple or of a prophet. Now, as long as your charity extends itself only to the living, let your motive be never so pure, and for the love of God, alas, you are often deceived, and think you do a good turn for an Apostle, and he is an apostate, or another Judas. You take him for a great servant of God, and he often proves to be a most wicked fellow: a ravenous wolf in a lamb's skin. And this is seen daily, and everywhere: not but that you ought to do it, and shall never want your reward. But it falls out clear otherwise, when you place your charity upon the souls in Purgatory; for they are undoubtedly the disciples of Christ, they are prophets and great Saints; and therefore, whosoever shall do any charitable office for them, may well hope to have the reward of Saints. For so, it is not only those that are thus relieved shall be translated into Heaven, but those also that relieve them shall be carried thither in due time, to take possession of the glory of the Saints.

St. Thomas tells us, there is an order to be observed in our works of charity to our neighbour, that is, we are to see where there is a greater obligation, a greater necessity, a greater merit, and the like circumstances. Now, where is there more necessity or more obligation, than to run to the fire and to help those that lie there and are not able to get out? Where can you have more merit than to have a hand in raising up so great Saints and

servants of God? Where have you more assurance than where you are sure to lose nothing? Where can you find an object of more compassion than where there is the greatest misery in the world? Where is there seen more of God's glory, than to send new Saints into Heaven to praise God eternally? Lastly, where can you show more charity, and more of the love of God, than to employ your tears, your sighs, your goods, your hands, your heart, your life, and all your devotion, to procure a good that surpasses all other goods: I mean, to make souls happy for all eternity, by translating them into heavenly joys out of insupportable torments? That glorious Apostle of the Indies, St. Francis Xavier, could run from one end of the world to the other to convert a soul, and think it no journey. The dangers by sea and land seemed sweet, the tempests pleasing, the labour easy, and his whole time well employed. Good God! what an advantage have we, that with so little trouble and few prayers, may send a thousand beautiful souls into Heaven, without the least hazard of losing anything? St. Xavier could not be certain that the Japonians, for example, whom he baptized, would persevere in their faith; and, though they should persevere in it, he could have as little certainty of their salvation. Now, it is an article of our faith, that the holy souls in Purgatory are in grace, and shall assuredly one day enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.

But, since I am entered upon the point of seeking God's greater glory, and procuring that His Sacred Majesty be worthily adored by His creatures, where

can you find anything among all the other works of mercy more eminent in this kind than to concur towards the peopling of Paradise, and increasing the number of those thrice happy souls? Let it be by never so little that you advance the term appointed for the eternal happiness of a soul, by recovering it out of Purgatory and placing it above the firmament; oh, into what acts of love will she break forth? what glory will she give to God? what excess of love, what transports, visions, unions, and miracles of Heaven will ensue? And what a happiness is it for you to have concurred to make up all these wonders, which would have been quite lost all this time, and by your occasion are now added as a superabundant increase of God's glory!

St. Ignatius, that glorious Founder of the Society of Jesus, hesitated not to say, he should think his whole life well bestowed, should he but hinder an ungracious soul from offending God one only night. Such an esteem he had of increasing God's glory, and such an apprehension of diminishing the least grain thereof. What a mercy is it, then, that by helping a soul out of its purging flames, you are the cause of a million of most Divine acts, which would never have been, had not the time of its delivery been antedated by your charitable and devout prayers. Tell me, dear reader, what can you do here below comparable to this? How many thousand beggars, prisoners, and sick persons may you relieve, without procuring the thousandth part of this unspeakable good? That which one does by another's means, he is accounted to do himself.

So that all the new Saints, I mean, all the souls who have been delivered by your assistance, shall be, as it were, your lieutenants and your vicar-generals, or your ambassadors, to do incomparable wonders in Heaven, whereof you are the cause, in whole or in part. And what comparison is there, now, between the good we do for men upon earth, and what we do to relieve souls in the other world?

There is but one only case that can be imagined, in which your charity might seem clear better employed than in comforting the poor languishing souls in Purgatory. And it is this: suppose that you had but one instant of life at your disposal, and could either employ it in the conversion of a desperate sinner, who must otherwise be infallibly damned without redemption, or in relieving a soul in Purgatory: whether you ought not, in this case, to prefer the eternal salvation of a sinner before the present ease of a soul in Purgatory? To this I answer, that, in the first place, you put a very metaphysical case, far remote from all common practice; for it is not a thing that will probably ever happen. But, should it really fall out, then, in God's name, do the one or the other, as God shall inspire you: and God will sooner multiply the bread in your hands, than you should want an occasion of relieving the poor, whether living or dead. But to give you better satisfaction, put the case as you please, and I will make the souls in Purgatory themselves judges of the cause, that they may have no reason to complain, or appeal from my sentence.

They will certainly tell you, that where there is question of a mortal sin, or of the eternal loss of a soul that has been ransomed with the Blood of Christ, they had rather lie still groaning under their torments, than purchase a little ease at so dear a rate.

No, they are not so selfish: their love is more pure than so: their fidelity to God will never suffer them to seek their own glory with the least diminution or lessening of God's glory. St. Catharine of Sienna begged two years together, with tears in her eyes, that she might be damned for all mankind; and that she alone might suffer all the pains of Hell, rather than any one soul should be damned, or her dearest Spouse grievously offended. And do you believe that a tender virgin, made of flesh and blood, and as yet a sinner, at least so far as to be guilty of certain venial transgressions, can have less self-love, more courage, and more of the love of God, than the souls of the other world, who are totally disengaged from all self-respects, and love God only with a most perfect love? No; they had rather double and redouble their cruel martyrdoms, with a million of fresh torments, than willingly give consent that, for their sakes, one should forbear to hinder the commission of a mortal sin or the damnation of a soul. And, therefore, should the case fall in your way, stick not to bestow your time for the benefit of the living: do not so much as think on the souls in Purgatory, who would most willingly melt themselves away in tormenting fire, rather than permit such a horrible mischief.

§ 3.—*Of the great advantages we receive by this devotion for the souls departed.*

But, to come nearer to you, seeing that interest rules the world most, and is the spirit that moves the whole universe, if you are at all sensible of your own interest, I mean a holy interest, allowed of by God Himself, to wit, an interest which we all have in the increase of our grace, glory, and eternal happiness: in God's name, do all the good you can for your neighbour. Except only the case I lately spoke of, I defy you to do the thing that can bring you so much true and solid good, or be of so much advantage to you, as is the striving to relieve the souls in Purgatory.

And first: though it were true (as many will have it) that the souls in Purgatory are not able to obtain the least mercy of Almighty God, for themselves or us, in respect of their present confinement, in which they lie, as it were, at pawn, and under a most severe restraint and strict seizure, yet have we reason to believe their good Angels will supply their defect, and not fail to requite you for seconding them so well in delivering the souls under their charge, for whom they are in a kind of pain, to see them endure so much pain, and yet to be held back, as it were, only by a small thread from enjoying their full liberty, and becoming their companions and as glorious as themselves. One sigh, or sob, one tear of yours, shed for these captive souls, is enough to cut the thread, and then they will cry out with holy David: Our souls are got loose, like

the innocent sparrow, and are flown up to Heaven; having happily broken the iron nets that held them bound to hellish fire. The holy name of God be ever blessed, and they also who have been so kind as to call upon Him in our behalfs. It is you, dear reader, to whom these holy souls address their speech, whom you have comforted with a good wish, or with a tear, or with a Mass, or with a Communion.

But suppose the Angels should neglect to perform this good office, which notwithstanding we have reason to expect of their charity, God Himself would not fail to do it. For, beholding the zeal with which you burn, and the charity which impels you to succour those tormented souls, whom He loves, and for whom He has prepared eternal laurels and rich crowns of immortal glory, can you doubt whether He takes it well that you love these His dear friends, that you have a tender heart towards those He so tenderly loves, that you do this good work, believing (as it is most true) that this is fraternal charity in the highest point of its perfection, and that, making choice of it to serve God in the best manner by yourself, and by those holy souls, His infinite goodness is highly pleased with your charity, so well bestowed, and on so good a subject?

Mark well the reason I am now going about to lay down before you. Christ Jesus has vouchsafed to honour His Church so far as to style it His Body, of which He is the Divine Head. Now, it is most certain, that of all the members of this most sacred

and mystical Body, that which is the most oppressed with evils, and the most lamentably afflicted, are these dear souls, who are, alas, most severely treated in the bosom of the Church Suffering; since there is not any torment in the world that is comparable to theirs, as you have seen elsewhere.

If, then, our Blessed Saviour see your heart melt with compassion for that part of His Body which is the most comfortless and the most afflicted of all others, sure He must needs love you with a paternal affection, and give you a thousand benedictions for the ease and comfort you give Him in that part of His Body which suffers most. Historians tell us, how a man having one day plucked out a thorn out of a lion's foot, the generous beast, feeling himself eased in that part which was most grieved, soon forgot his fierce nature, and by force of love and gratitude metamorphosed himself into a lamb, to wait upon this saviour of his, who had thus preserved his life; and, by way of requital, in a like occasion of danger, saved the man's life also, to the astonishment of all the beholders. God plays the lion of Juda below in Purgatory, permitting His justice to sway the sceptre of rigour. Now, if you but pull out the thorn out of His Foot, that is, if you ease Him in that part of His mystical Body which suffers the pains of Purgatory, this Lion will soon become a Lamb: He will not only save these poor souls, but when you yourself are in most need, as when you are struggling for life, He will show Himself, He will fight for you, and will give you the true life; in a word, He will make you clearly see

how well He takes it that you have plucked out the thorn out of His Foot.

Now, let us suppose the worst. Put the case, that neither God nor His Angels do requite you. Yet I maintain, you cannot do an act of fraternal charity wherein your gain is so great and so certain as this. I do not only say this, because the men of this world are commonly in an ill state, in which their prayers can do you no service. I do not only say it because, though you suppose them to be in a state of grace, yet is their devotion for you soon at an end, and, while it lasts, is but a slender, cold, and untoward piece of service.

I do not only say that these souls, who are truly miserable, and yet holy, under a cruel restraint, and yet happy, not able to merit anything, and yet gracious in the sight of His Divine Majesty:—I do not only say, that when they are once got into Paradise, they will be so many Guardian Angels of yours, so many advocates to plead your cause at the grand tribunal of the Most Holy Trinity, so many patrons and sureties for you and yours. But I say, that even while they remain prisoners, they will do miracles for you.

I said, miracles. Now hear how they will do that which cannot be done. They will effect that for you which they cannot do for themselves; and, were it necessary to work a miracle in good earnest, they would sooner do it than forsake you in your necessities. I am not ignorant that the Angelical Doctor[1] teaches that those unhappy souls are in

[1] St. Thomas, 2. 2. 9. 83. a. 11. ad. 3.

such a wretched state, that they have more need to beg our prayers than to pray for us; that they are wholly taken up with paying their debts to God's justice, Who exacts an account of them to the last farthing; that this suffering Church is rather in a condition to suffer than to act anything; that it is not now a time to merit, but to burn; not to succour those that are living, but to expect succour from them. A man that is drowning has not leisure to think of others; a notorious malefactor, that swims in boiling oil, is not in a place where he ought, or can, plead for another; his whole mind is so plunged in the oil, and all his thoughts so overwhelmed with the boiling liquor that torments him. Alas! those racked souls have more reason to cry out, with holy Job: Ah, you my friends, you at least take pity of me, for the hand of God's justice, so lovingly severe, hangs continually over me, and strikes me without intermission; cease not to pour out your prayers for me, to abate the rigour of His justice with your charitable sighs, for a most miserable soul.[1] They have, I say, more need to beg our prayers than to pray for us. I know well, that many learned Doctors are of opinion that the souls in Purgatory do not pray for us. But it is no point of our faith; and therefore they must give me leave to side with other great divines, who very probably maintain that those grateful souls pray most ardently for those that pray for them.[2] The

[1] Job xix. 21.

[2] Bellarmine, *De Purgatorio*, lib. 2, c. 17; Suarez, d. 47, sec. 2; *De Oratione*, lib. i. c. 11.

rich glutton, though he was certainly damned, could pray, after his fashion, for his brothers: and shall not a holy soul have the power to do it? Abraham argued the case with him; called him, lovingly, son;[1] and seemed to be upon the point of doing something for him; at least, gave him the comfort to tell him, that his brothers had Moses and the prophets to instruct them: as if he would have said, that if his brothers had not been sufficiently provided of other means, he would peradventure have granted him his request, and sent Lazarus to preach to them. But to give you a stronger[2] instance. The devils themselves have put up their requests to God, and have been heard, and obtained that sorry comfort they desired: as when they desired not to be thrust down into Hell, and got leave to enter into the herd of swine, and then throw themselves into the sea.[3] What! shall the damned souls pray, and shall the devils be able to obtain their request, and shall not the souls in Purgatory have the like privileges? St. Thomas does not deny that they pray for us: but only affirms that they have more need of our prayers; which is most true, but may well consist with their praying for us. A wicked felon, that is going to be turned off the ladder, has yet a care to pray for his whole family, for the King and the whole Bench that condemned him, and many times for the very

[1] St. Luke xvi. 25.

[2] The original has "stranger," which perhaps is the true reading.

[3] St. Matt. viii. 31.

hangman too who is ready to strangle him. And shall this wretch have more power, or more zeal, or more grace, than those souls, who are so holy, and who, in spite of their torments, are very present to themselves, and have their wits about them, free from all trouble and disquiet which might rob them of the sentiment and feeling which they ought to have, of the obligation they owe to the charity of those that pray for them? Oh, no: they do the one, and yet neglect not the other. They pray for themselves in suffering, they pray for us in sighing; and the one hinders not the other in Purgatory, since even here upon earth the soul that is immersed in flesh and blood can perform both parts, that is, satisfy for herself, and yet have a solicitous care of others. Did not Onias and Hieremias pray affectionately for the people of God whilst they were in the dark prison of Abraham's bosom? And do not the Saints assure us, that God wrought a miracle for the merits of St. Paschasius, who yet, nevertheless, was not out of Purgatory?[1] The same is reported of St. Severin; and though there be some dispute who this St. Severin was, yet the authors doubt not but that a Saint in Purgatory may work a miracle by God's permission. Some that are damned have wrought miracles; and is it such a wonder that we should allow this to the Saints of God's suffering Church?

We read in the Life of St. Catharine of Bologna, whose body, flesh and bone, is yet entire, and sits

[1] St. Gregory, *Dialogue* 4.

to this hour in a chair exposed to the view of the world, though it be above sixty years since her death—we read, I say, in her Life (which has the approbation of the Apostolic See), that she had not only a strange tenderness for the souls, but a singular devotion to them, and was wont to recommend herself to them in all her necessities. The reason she alleged for it was this: that she had learnt of Almighty God how she had frequently obtained far greater favours by their intercession than by other means. And the story adds this; that it often happened that what she begged of God, at the intercession of the Saints in Heaven, she could never obtain of Him, and yet as soon as she addressed herself to the souls in Purgatory she had her suit instantly granted. Can there be any question but there are souls in that purging fire, who are of a higher pitch of sanctity, and of far greater merit in the sight of God, than a thousand and a thousand Saints who are already glorious in the Court of Heaven?

Tell me, was not our dread Sovereign, during his late banishment, more puissant and more mighty than his subjects, who lived still in their own country, at their ease, and perhaps in greater plenty? For we see him no sooner restored to his undoubted right, but he is every way as great a King as his predecessors, as richly attired, as much courted by foreign princes, and as gloriously attended at Whitehall; whereas the rest of his nobility and gentry are but his creatures and most humble servants.

There are great souls that for some slight misdemeanours are banished out of the Kingdom of Heaven, to which they are heirs apparent, as being the adopted sons of God by grace, nay, more, are locked up in that burning furnace which we call Purgatory; but they are scarce let loose when you may see them come out in triumph, and go soaring up above the heavens, so high as to lose sight of them. And when they are once there, what will they not do for you? And what did not our gracious King, according to his power, to honour and gratify those that stuck close to him in his misfortune, or were so lucky as to have a great hand in restoring him? King David, at his death, recommending his good servants to his son Solomon, spoke thus withal: "My son, there is such a one and such a one have well deserved death for the crimes they have committed; but when I was generally deserted, and when others took the boldness upon them to throw stones at me, these men took pity on me and gave me succour in my greatest affliction; and therefore I charge thee, O my dear son, to be mindful of them, and to favour them, as thou lovest me." Have not holy souls as much charity as David? Is not the misfortune into which they are fallen of a more sensible nature than his? In what a lofty strain will they then represent unto God the good service you have done for them in their extreme necessity, when they find themselves once securely seated in those heavenly mansions! And what will not that boundless mercy be moved to grant, at the instance of so dear friends?

Shall I tell you, there are many worthy persons who think these following words of Jesus Christ may be very properly applied to the souls in Purgatory? Do good, saith He, and make yourselves friends at the charge of your purses; and be good stewards of Mammon, the false god of riches, that those whom you relieve may assist you at the hour of your death, and lead you into eternal tabernacles. Among the poor, none so secure of enjoying the delights of Paradise as the souls in Purgatory, who are all predestinate, and all holy. For the present, they are poor indeed, and helpless creatures; but if you contribute never so little to their ease, they will be sure to requite you in your necessities; if not before, at least when they are once possessed of the joys of Heaven.

Cardinal Baronius, a man of credit beyond exception, relates[1] how a person of rare virtue found himself dangerously assaulted at the hour of his death; and that in this agony he saw the heavens open, and about eight thousand champions, all covered with white armour, descend, who fell instantly to encourage him, by giving him this assurance, that they were come to fight for him, and to disengage him from that doubtful combat. And when, with infinite comfort, and tears in his eyes, he besought them to do him the favour to let him know who they were that had so highly obliged him: "We are," said they, "the souls whom you have saved and delivered out of Purgatory; and now, to requite the favour, we are come down to

[1] *Annal. Eccles.*

convey you instantly into Heaven." And with that, he died.

We read such another story of St. Gertrude;[1] how she was troubled at her death to think what must become of her, since she had given away all the rich treasure of her satisfactions to redeem other poor souls, without reserving anything to herself: but that our Blessed Saviour gave her the comfort to know, that she was not only to have the like favour of being immediately conducted into Heaven out of this world, by those innumerable souls whom she had sent thither before her by her fervent prayers, but was there also to receive a hundred-fold of eternal glory in reward of her charity. By which examples we may learn, that we cannot make better use of our devotion and charity than this way. But he that will fully satisfy himself that he can lose nothing, but gain excessively, though he should offer up all his satisfactory works for the souls in Purgatory, let him read over what Father Eusebius Nierembergicus and Father James Monford have excellently well written upon this subject.

[1] Dion. Carthus. apud P. Roam, *De Purg.* c. 20.

THE FOURTH SURVEY.

OF THE POWERFUL MEANS TO QUENCH THE FLAMES OF PURGATORY.

COULD the poor souls but help themselves, or abate the cruelty of their torments with all their devout aspirations, so pure and so holy, they would soon free themselves. But, alas, they cannot: and this is one of their greatest miseries, to see themselves in so desperate a condition as to be overwhelmed with raging fire, and not to have the power to get out, or to allay the fury of the flames, or to merit the least favour in this kind; not so much as *de congruo*, as the scholastics speak, or by a certain congruity, harmony, or fitness. The time of meriting expired with their lives; what now remains is wholly appointed for suffering: and it is not the least of their vexations, to see how easily they might have prevented all these mischiefs in their lifetime, and that now there is no remedy, but by suffering, to supply for that negligence, though they would never so gladly. Howsoever, I love those divines[1] who are something more civil in this point than their fellows; and am easily persuaded by them, that although the souls cannot immediately

[1] Suarez, sec. 3, d. 19, post St. Thomam.

contribute the least to their own ransom, or any way merit their own deliverance, yet they may be so happy as to work upon the goodness of their Angels, and by their means obtain some sweet refreshments at the merciful hand of God wherewith to allay the bitterness of their torments. And, following their opinion who teach that they pray for us, and procure us heavenly favours, what inconsequence were it, to say further, that they move our good Angels to inspire us efficaciously, to intercede for them, and to assist them with all the duties of Christian charity? it being a thing to which the holy Angels are otherwise of themselves so much inclined, without the solicitation or importunity of others.

§ 1.—*What succour they receive from the Angels and Saints in Heaven?*

In the first place, you would be resolved whether the Angels and Saints in Heaven, and above all, the Mother of Mercy, pray really for them; and if so, how comes it to pass that they do not every hour, or indeed every instant, make a general gaol delivery, and quite empty Purgatory? For what power has not the Mother of God? What cannot so many millions of Angels and Saints do? What can they be denied, in so favourable a request, for persons of so high merit? I answer, that they pray for them, and pray in good earnest; and I say further, that they are not content with a quarant hour,[1] now and then, as our custom is, in occasions of pressing necessity,

[1] *i.e.* Obtaining a *quarantaine*, or Indulgence of forty days.

but they keep a perpetual and constant course of prayer in Heaven, in favour of these holy souls.

This I take to be the pious belief of the Catholic Church, as delivered by the whole sacred torrent of Doctors.[1] Nor is there the least reason why they should not do it; being not only powerful, but full of charity: especially when they remember that the like charity was bestowed on many of themselves, that the necessity of the souls is extreme urgent, that they are all members of one body, that they do not only concur to the glorification of their dear brethren, but are themselves to receive an additional increase of accidental glory for having advanced the delivery of those precious souls, who perhaps may be holier than some of their own blessed company. Besides, this is a charitable office, suits well with their happy state, and there appears not the least inconvenience in it in this world. And yet, if this be so, one would think they might soon turn all the souls loose, and empty Purgatory, so that it were impossible for any soul to make any long stay there. Hold; you must pardon me, and not flatter yourselves too much with this vain credulity. You are to know, that the Saints are not such strangers to the decrees of Divine justice, as to beg the soul's release without punishment; for that were the way to destroy all justice. No; they accommodate themselves to the laws of Heaven, and willingly submit to the most equitable resolves of God's justice; amongst which it stands irrevocably decreed, that this life should be the

Vide Suarez, d. 48, sec. 5.

place for mercy, but that justice should bear the sway in Purgatory. Do not then wonder, that the Saints do not obtain so extravagant a favour. The souls themselves, who are the most nearly concerned in their own sufferings, would be ashamed to demand it. Is it not reason, that God should be God in all His attributes, and exercise His justice as well as His mercy? We must take heed how we employ, or rather abuse, His clemency, so as to break down the laws of His justice. Would you then know what the Saints do?

First, they pray God to inspire the living to offer up their satisfactory works for the dead, and to find out a thousand inventions to help them.

Secondly, they strive to shorten the time, by procuring that the intensity of their pains may supply for the length and extension thereof: wherein there is no wrong done to justice, but only an exchange made of a long pain into a shorter one, but more violent; and yet this is an extraordinary favour: for you cannot imagine what an incomparable treasure is one day in Heaven advanced before the time prefixed.

Thirdly, many Saints have left behind them a great treasure of satisfactions above what was due for their sins; so many holy innocent hermits, so many chaste virgins, so many great Saints of all Orders in God's Church, who lead such austere lives. Now, is it not very likely that these good Saints may pray God to apply the superabundance of these their merits and satisfactions to the poor souls in Purgatory? And who knows, whether the

infinite goodness of God may not accept it for good payment?

Fourthly, why may we not piously imagine, that even those Saints who have no such remainder of merits, pray those that have it to bestow it as an alms to relieve the poor souls? Sure, they are so courteous as not to deny anything to one another, especially in a case of so great commiseration: and why should they hoard up these precious treasures which cannot avail them? or how can they bestow them more charitably?

Fifthly, what harm were it to say that the Saints beseech our Blessed Lady, and even Christ Himself, Who has an infinite treasure of satisfactions in store, to apply some of their precious merits this way? I know the severer divines will not have it that the Saints have recourse in this to our Blessed Saviour, Who has determined what and how He will have this applied, according to the ordinary course and fixed laws of His Divine justice. But there be other Doctors of a milder temper, who believe He may be drawn sometimes to waive the extremity of rigour, and to dispense with His own laws; so that by extraordinary privilege we may hope for this favour of sweet Jesus and His Saints. And if other Saints have so much charity for the poor souls, you will think it but reasonable that the fathers and mothers (the same is to be said of other near relations) who are in Heaven, and know that the souls of their dear children are locked up in that fiery furnace, will use all their possible endeavour, as far as God will give them leave, to fetch them

out. But what shall I say of those Saints who were lifted up into Heaven before their time, by the extraordinary assistance of the living, whose turn now it is to be in Purgatory? Is it not very credible they will now requite their courtesy, and with usury too? For example: there may be a soul in Purgatory that has helped above a thousand other souls out of that place of torments. Can it be imagined but that that regiment of Saints will do all they can, and more if it were possible, to deliver this their deliverer, and to place him in the Court of Heaven, who had so great a hand in their timely preferment? But, because we are mere strangers to the style of that Court, and nothing acquainted with the constitutions of that Divine monarchy, let us conclude only thus: That whatsoever the Saints can do for the comfort of these languishing souls, we may be sure they do it, and do it punctually, without neglecting the least moment; and, where they cannot prevail without breaking the just decrees of their Sovereign, there they willingly acquiesce, and with due submission adore the Divine justice. So much for the Saints. Let us now speak of the souls themselves, and see——

§ 2.—*Whether they are capable of being relieved by one another's prayers.*

It may be justly questioned whether the souls, though altogether incapable of helping themselves in their extreme misery, may not at least be permitted to help one another by their devout prayers. For if they have the privilege to pray for the Saints in

Heaven, that God will be pleased to increase their glory; if they can pray for the living, as I endeavoured to evince in the last section, nay, if a damned soul may have liberty to pray for his friends, as it seems to be clear in the case of the rich glutton, why may they not be so kind as to pray for one another? "If the flames of Hell," said the devout Sales, that worthy prelate of Geneva, "were not sullied with the smoke of sin, were they but pure flames of holy love, oh, what a pleasure were it to be swallowed up by such flames, or to be thus condemned eternally to love God!" What should hinder, then, but that the souls in Purgatory, where the fire of love triumphs over their tormenting flames, may display their ardent charity, and vigorously apply themselves to assist and comfort one another, as far as God's providence will give them leave? May we not presume to fancy, that out of an excess of charity they are willing to despoil themselves of all those helps and advantages which they receive from their friends, to throw them upon others, offering themselves freely to suffer for one another? Tertullian[1] admires how prodigal the first Christians were in this kind of charity; of suffering, and even dying for one another; how ready they were to leap into the very flames, and expose themselves to the most cruel tortures that could be devised: and all to save others, for whom they were prepared. What? shall frail mortals, who are made up of flesh and blood, thus willingly suffer for one another, and shall not

[1] Tertullian, *Apolog.*

the souls, who have cast off, with their bodies, all human weakness and imperfection, have as much charity for other souls? Especially, being certain of their salvation, of which men in this life can have no assurance, without a particular revelation.

Didymus offered to die for St. Theodora; and finally died both for her and with her.[1] Eliseus, being dead himself, raised another from death to life, which was more than he did for himself. St. Paul would have been content to be anathema, to save the Jews, always under condition that it might be without sin. David would willingly have met with death in her ugliest attire, so he might have saved his son Absalom; and yet he knew him to be but a graceless and unnatural parricide. Shall not holy souls have as much kindness for other souls, whom they see upon the point of being metamorphosed into Seraphim, as David had for a mere reprobate and lost creature? Many Saints in this world have begged it as a favour of Almighty God, that they might suffer for the souls in Purgatory; and have done it in good earnest, freely renouncing their own conveniences for the souls' comfort, by a most heroical act of supernatural charity. Do not you believe, that the souls in Purgatory have a more refined love, and that they actuate themselves in more heroical, transcendent acts of charity, since they are not only grown to be impeccable, but have withal a far clearer insight into the nature of this Divine virtue? Aye, but—you say—they can merit nothing. True; but do

[1] St. Ambrose, *De Virgin.*

you take them to be so selfish as to do nothing purely for God's sake, without seeking their own interest? What say you to our Guardian Angels? Is it for any private lucre or merit, or purely to please God, and to do us a work of singular charity, that they have so solicitous a care of us? And when God Himself loves us, is it, I pray you, for any interest of His own, or out of an excess of His overflowing bounty and charity, which well becomes Him? "Be perfect," saith He, "as I am perfect."[1] Now, the means to do this is, to be well versed in these acts of heroical love; as, to love God for God, because He deserves it, as being the only charming Object of our love. "I love," said St. Augustine, "because I love; I am resolved to love, because I am beloved of Him that loves me only because He will needs love me." To love for mere love is the quintessence of Divine love. What? shall we be so niggardly, so mercenary, or so mechanical, as not to exercise an act of pure love, without hope of reward? Is not our love well requited, if we please God and those whom God loveth? They say, Apelles would give away his pictures for nothing; he had so great a value for them, he thought no set price could be equal to their worth, and that gold itself was too mean a thing to purchase such precious labours: which he therefore chose rather to give away gratis, than to expose to an unworthy sale. So that the bare pleasure he took in bestowing them upon his friends, was all the recompense he looked for, for those incomparable pieces. And certainly it is a

[1] St. Matt. v. 48.

most noble and truly royal thing, to give, and to give without hope of requital.

Seneca spoke a word, which showed a magnanimous and true generous heart.[1] "To give, and to lose all benefit by one's gift, is no such wonderful thing; but to lose all benefit, and yet to be still giving, is a Divine masterpiece, and an act worthy of God indeed." Now, when these charitable souls can gratify others, by giving away the charities which are bestowed on them, why should they not do it? To do a pleasure for another, without incommoding oneself, is no more than what you may expect of an Arabian or barbarian; but to incommode oneself, to lie burning in fire, groaning under excessive torments; and all this to make others happy, is certainly an act worthy of those noble and generous souls, who are all inflamed with pure Divine love. When the people had a mind to flatter their Cæsars, they would cry out: "O Jupiter, take away some of our years; shorten our lives, decimate our days, and give it all to prolong the life of our good Prince! Let him live, at the charge of our lives; we are all ready to lay them down at his feet, that he alone may live and reign happily, in the flourishing greatness of his Empire." Shall infidels have more kindness for a mortal man, perhaps a wicked tyrant, or a profane atheist, than holy souls have for those that are about to be canonized as Saints in the Church Triumphant? I have heard of great servants of God, who, when they saw some famous preacher, or apostolical person, draw

[1] Seneca, *De Benef.*

near to his end, would express themselves to this purpose: Oh, that I were permitted to die in his stead! for I, alas, am but an unprofitable member of the Church; all my services avail but little to advance God's cause: whereas this worthy person may do a world of good, and be a comfort to infinite souls. What should hinder a soul in Purgatory from having the like feeling? May she not, and with truth, cry out: I am well acquainted with my own abilities, and can have a near guess what I am able to do in Paradise, where I am like to be one of the meanest servants in the whole house of God; and therefore may be well spared. But there is such a soul: had she but once cleared the petty debts she stands yet engaged for, she would instantly mount above all the choirs of Angels, and possibly soar up to the highest Seraphim. Oh, that I might but have leave to suffer here a while in her place! how willingly would I do it, that so my God might be the sooner and better glorified in Heaven by this happy soul, and a million of other souls upon earth receive comfort and protection from her powerful intercessions! I willingly resign unto her all the right I have of being set free myself, and, if God permit, I am ready to make her a deed of gift of all the suffrages which my dear friends have sent me: for sure, all the pains which shall fall upon me by this bargain, cannot but be lovingly sweet, since they are the cause of so great a good in the imperial Court of Heaven. St. Christina was already lodged in Heaven, says Cardinal Bellarmine,[1] when she

[1] *De gemitu col.* c. de Purg.

quitted the glory of Paradise, to exchange it for the flames of a thousand and a thousand most cruel martyrdoms. And why may we not believe that souls so charitable would willingly yet remain in their flames, that others more worthy than themselves may be sent forth in their stead, to glorify God in Heaven? Whether God accept of these holy desires or no, may be a question; but at least it seems very credible, that the souls who are so replenished with perfect charity, make such tenders of their service, as far as God gives them leave, and as far as it may stand with the laws of the Church Suffering. But enough of what passes in the other world; of which we have no certain revelation, nor other clear light to guide us by. Let us now turn our speech to the living, and see what they are able to perform for the benefit of the dead.

§ 3.—*That the dead may receive help from us that are living, and how we must be qualified to do them good.*

Be pleased to take notice what several meanings these three words import; satisfaction, impetration, and suffrage. Satisfaction implies a good work, accompanied with some grief or pain, corresponding to the pleasure we unadvisedly took in sinning; whereby we make an honourable amends, and satisfy the laws of justice, by repairing the injury we have done. Impetration is a kind of letter of request, which we present to the mercy of God, beseeching Him to pardon those for whom we offer up the sacrifice of our devotions and the incense of

our sighs and prayers; so that our prayers address themselves solely to the mercy of God, and crave an absolute pardon, or abolishment of the crime, as a pure gift, without offering any proportionable satisfaction, save only that of our Blessed Saviour, or, in general, of the Church Militant. Suffrage is a term which comprehends both; whether it be a penal work, or a prayer only, or both happily united together. The Church Triumphant, to speak properly, cannot satisfy; because there is no place for penal works in the Court of Heaven, whence all grief and pain are eternally banished.

Wherefore the Saints may well proceed by way of impetration and prayers: or, at most, represent their former satisfactions, which are carefully laid up in the treasury of the Church, in lieu of those which are due from others: but as for any new satisfaction or payment, derived from any penal act of their own, it is not to be looked for in those happy mansions of eternal glory.

The Church Militant may do either; as having this advantage over the Church Triumphant, that she can help the souls in Purgatory by her prayers and satisfactory works, and by offering up her charitable suffrages, wherewith to pay the debts of those poor souls, who are run in arrear in point of satisfaction due for their sins. Had they but fasted, prayed, laboured, or suffered a little more in this life, they had gone directly into Heaven; what they unhappily neglected, we may supply for them; and it will be accepted for good payment, as from their bails and sureties. You know, he that stands surety

for another, takes the whole debt upon himself; this is our case; for, the living as it were entering bond for the dead, become responsible for their debts, and offer up fast for fast, tears for tears, in the same measure and proportion as they were liable to them; and so defray the debt of their friends at their own charge, and make all clear.

This, then, is the general sense of the Church, that the living may help the afflicted souls in all these several ways: either by satisfying for them, or by their prayers, or by interposing the satisfactions of Christ Jesus, Who has left them at the disposition of the Holy Church, His beloved Spouse. And what rational person can deny this? since they are all members of the same mystical body; and consequently are bound in charity to yield mutual assistance and comfort to one another; and the rather, inasmuch as every one in his turn may stand in need of the same friendship, and look to be requited. "I am partaker," said holy David, "with all those that fear Thee:"[1] and Holy Church to this purpose repeats that doleful ditty, so full of tenderness, out of Job: "Take pity on me, at least you that are my friends; for the hand of God has touched,"[2] yea, has fallen heavily upon me. And otherwise we must discredit a world of good authors, a world of authentical records, a world of most pregnant proofs, and blow upon the reputation of venerable antiquity, which has ever held it as one of the main points of Christian charity to pray fervently for the faithful departed, to pay their debts, and to strive, by all

[1] Psalm cxviii. 63. [2] Job xix. 21.

means possible, to help them out of their flames. To which purpose, by special favour, Almighty God has sometimes permitted souls to show themselves visibly to their friends and kindred, to beg relief by Masses, prayers, and other good works, whereby to shorten and diminish the sharpness of their torments. So did Pope Innocent III., and a thousand others, as appears by unquestionable relations of grave authors. What they cannot do of themselves, they beg of us; and beg it as an alms for charity's sake: and it were both sin and shame to deny them. That which often costs us but little, they esteem at a high rate; and, could they but give us a clear sight of the wonderful effects of our small endeavours, we should questionless take their cause more to heart than we do. However, St. Thomas and other divines assure us that, even in rigour of justice, our satisfactions are accepted in lieu of theirs; since God has so ordained and passed His word for it to His dear Spouse the Church, who really believes it to be so, and proceeds accordingly. So that we may rest confident, that whosoever undertakes to provide for those distressed souls, so he be qualified with the conditions which are requisite on his part, shall infallibly relieve them. Well; but you long now to know what these conditions are, with which we may be most certain that our suffrages are effectual towards the purifying and releasing of the poor souls in Purgatory.

He that will have his works acceptable in the sight of God, for the obtaining of any mercy for himself or others, must in the first place be in the

state of grace; that is, God's friend: for how can God be pleased at the doings of His mortal enemies? How can He relish or approve actions which proceed from a heart envenomed with the deadly poison of mortal sin?[1] Could I work miracles, and wanted but a grain of true charity; all this, says St. Paul,[2] were but wind, it were all unprofitable. Next unto this, he must not fail to have an intention of doing such a good work to relieve the soul, which either he names himself, or leaves to God's determination and choice. Besides, the work must be good and virtuous of itself; that is, accompanied with all due circumstances. The more love, humility, contrition, and devotion you bring, and the more penal your work is, the more precious will it be in the sight of God, and the greater miracles will it do in Purgatory; rejoicing the afflicted souls, quenching their flames, and converting Purgatory into Paradise.

But let us now look a little into the consequence of this doctrine. Does it not hence follow, that all evil and ungodly priests are unprofitably employed for the good of the souls? for, since they are supposed to be in a damnable condition, all they do seems to be as good as nothing: and then, what a world of Masses shall we have quite cast away, what a world of foundations utterly lost; since they may often fall into such wicked hands! Away with these discourses; which are not only false, but

[1] Some theologians, however, of no small weight, hold a contrary opinion, as regards the gaining Indulgences for the souls in Purgatory. Both may be stated as probable. See what the author himself says, a little below.

[2] 1 Cor. xiii. 2.

very prejudicial to Purgatory. Good divinity teaches that a Mass is always a Mass,[1] always good, and of an infinite value: that the priest that says it, or sings it, as a minister of God's Church, let him be never so unworthy, is always acceptable for her sake in whose name he acts; that, if you take him as a private and particular person, it is true, all his prayers and devotions can avail nothing; but, as he represents the Church, he cannot fail to do the main deed we have in view; and we need not scruple it. You would be amazed, should I further tell you, that it may happen sometimes that you may gain more by hearing the Mass of an unworthy priest than of another; for that which is common to both is, that they both offer up the propitiatory sacrifice of the Mass, which is always pleasing in the sight of God: they are both ministers of the Church, and, under this qualification, they are both acceptable persons; both have the intention you require, of relieving the soul you recommend unto them; both perform all the holy rites and ceremonies, which the Church prescribes in this case. In this they differ: that the one adds particular devotions of his own, which are grateful to God, because he is in the state of grace, and one of His adopted children; whereas the other's personal actions are of no worth, because we suppose him to be in a ill state. Well; but this is the cause why you that know it, and are fearful to lose by the bargain, bring so many theological acts of faith, hope, and charity of your own, so many holy

[1] Suarez, d. 48, sec. 8.

affections springing from a zealous devotion, all inflamed with the love of God; that the loss you were afraid of is abundantly compensated, and with no little advantage to your cause. Be not then of the number of those mistaken persons, who profess they are afraid to found obits for their deceased kindred, least the Masses should come to be said by ungodly and irreligious priests. It were mere simplicity to be afraid of clear crystal water, because forsooth it issues out of the snout of a black marble serpent, or passes through the jaws of a lion of brass. Would you refuse a million of gold, if it were sent you out of Turkey from some wicked renegade? Or should the Pope send you a Cardinal's cap, would you be so squeamish as not to accept it, because the messenger that brought it were an ill conditioned fellow? Elias was not so dainty as to forbear his meat because it was brought by a raven. Do in God's name what is fitting; and leave the rest to God, Who out of His infinite goodness knows how to supply all these defects, especially such as happen against your will, and such as you know not how to prevent, unless you were a prophet.

§ 4.—*Of the particular ways we have to help them.*

The holy Canons and Doctors of the Church comprehend all the means and advantages we have to relieve the dead under these four general heads. (1) The priests' oblations and sacrifices; (2) the prayers of devout people; (3) alms-deeds; (4) fasting; under which you must include all kind of austerities,

all penal works that afflict the body, what way soever; and in a word, all that goes under the common notion of suffrages.

For the enjoying of all which helps, St. Augustine observes how greatly it may import to bury the dead in churches where the bodies of Saints and holy martyrs lie interred: not that the mere lying there can so much avail them; but for this, that devout people resorting more thither than to other places, to perform their devotions to God and His Saints, and seeing the tombs of their deceased friends, cannot but remember to apply their charitable suffrages for the help of such needy persons.

I am in love with that religious practice of Bologna; where, upon funeral days, they cause hundreds and thousands of Masses to be said for the soul departed, in lieu of other superfluous and vain ostentations. They stay not for the anniversary, nor for any other set day; but instantly do their best to release the poor soul from her torments, who must needs think the year long if she must stay for help till her anniversary day appears. They do not, for all this, despise the laudable customs of the Church; they bury their friends with honour; they clothe great numbers of poor people; they give liberal alms; but as there is nothing so certain, nothing so efficacious, nothing so Divine, as the holy Sacrifice of the Mass, they fix their whole affection there, and strive all they can to relieve the souls this way; and are by no means so lavish as the fashion is, in other idle expenses and inopportune feastings, which are often more

troublesome to the living than comfortable to the dead.

But you may not only comfort the afflicted souls by procuring Masses for them, nor yet only by offering up your prayers, fasts, alms-deeds, and such other works of piety; but you may bestow upon them all the good you do, and all the evil you suffer, in this world. If you offer up unto God all the cruel frettings and gripings you endure in a fit of the stone, which tears up your very entrails; if all the bitter sting and gnawings of the raging gout, when it buries you alive in a kind of Purgatory; if all the sensible tearings of a desperate megrim, when it cleaves your head in pieces; if the sullen humour of a quartan ague, which steeps your very heart in the gall of a deep melancholy; if all the other evils which murder you alive, and do not kill you outright, to be still killing you with a lingering death; if, I say, you offer up unto God all that causes you any grief or affliction, for the present relief of the poor languishing souls, you cannot believe what ease and comfort they will find by it. And as in the buckets of a well, while the one sinks down to the bottom the other mounts up to the top, so the lower you humble yourself in your sufferings, the higher you will raise the souls in their flight towards Heaven. Nor will you have cause to fear forgetting yourself, while you satisfy for them; for it will infallibly come to pass, as St. John Chrysostom assures us, that God, Who is always prodigal of His mercies, will be sure to remember you: and the holy souls soaring up to Heaven with the wings of

your charity, will there plead for you with so much eloquence as to gain your cause; or at least obtain so much patience for you, as to defy the worst of your evils which do so insult and tyrannize over you with so much insolence. Pliny would make us believe there are certain fishes that entertain so fair an amity and faithful correspondence with one another, that if one of them chance to be hung in the net, the other strives all he can possibly to set him free; and, having no other means to compass his design, presents his tail, or one of his fins, which the other lays fast hold on with his teeth, so that while the one thrusts with all his might, and the other draws with all his force, they break the mesh, make way for the prisoner to get out, and so swim away both triumphing in their liberty. Meanwhile, the kind fish that was sorely bitten, bleeds fresh of his wounds; and yet is so well pleased to have purchased his friend's liberty, though at the cost of his blood, that he thinks not of his own mischief for the joy he takes in his friend's safety. Do you the same for your friends, who are detained captives in Purgatory: lend them your arms, your head, your blood, all your griefs and pains, and they will be the sooner released out of their miserable thraldom; and you by their favour, shall in your turn pass through it with so much swiftness, that you shall scarce feel the scorching flames, with which they are so grievously tormented.

You have another easy but most powerful means to help these unfortunate souls; and that is, to dispense out liberally amongst them the inexhaustible

treasure of Indulgences; to cause Masses to be often said at privileged altars; to gain Jubilees and other Plenary Indulgences, which are applicable to the benefit of deceased souls. For though some extravagant writers have been so bold in their unwary speculations upon this subject, as to question whether the Pope's power in granting Jubilees and other pardons reach to Purgatory, or be only confined to this world, yet the current of sober Doctors must bear the sway, who all conclude that as to the living, His Holiness proceeds by way of absolution, and as to the dead, by way of suffrages and satisfactions; but has full power over both to loose or bind, open or lock up Heaven's gates, and to distribute the treasure of the Church; and that he has his commission for all this from the sacred mouth of Jesus Christ Himself.[1] Certainly, there be thousands that deserve to lie in Purgatory, were it only for this strange neglect, that having so rich a treasure in their hands wherewith to ransom poor captive souls, they were so careless as to make little or no use of it; but let a thousand occasions slip, in which they might have released them, and all for want of a little pains to gain Indulgences.

And they are the less to be excused, because it is very probable that they may gain Indulgences, which are applicable to the dead, whether they be in the state of grace or no, so they do but the work prescribed.[2]

"What shall they do," says the Apostle, "that

[1] St. Matt. xvi. 19.

[2] *Prepos. de Indulg.* q. 14, dub. 10, et alii passim.

are baptized for the dead?"[1] What means this baptism for the dead? I leave a dozen of interpretations, to tell you there were some fervent Christians in those days that took a world of pains and suffered a world of austerities for the faithful departed; and so were baptized in the tears of contrition, and in the blood of a most rigorous and penitential life. I require not so much of you; only a little care of applying such Indulgences as you have in your power, to do them good, who by a little of your favourable assistance, would be soon set at liberty. Cruel heart! canst thou refuse so slight a courtesy to souls so holy, and yet in so lamentable a condition? And if thou hast the honour to get in thither thyself, hereafter—I say, the honour—dost thou not deserve to be let alone to feel at leisure the smart of thy idleness and disloyalty? Who will take the pains to help a wretch who would scarce stir a finger to help out souls whose eternal happiness he might as easily have procured as cut a small thread in two or quench a little spark of fire?

I have not the confidence to propose things of greater hardship; and therefore I will not exhort you to imitate the example of St. Catharine of Sienna, who offered to suffer the pains of Purgatory itself, in place of her dear mother; nor that of St. Catharine of Genoa, who really suffered two years together what flesh and blood is not able to endure in this mortal life; nor that of St. Christina the Wonderful, whose excesses in this kind were incredible, if not

[1] 1 Cor. xv. 29.

attested by very credible persons.[1] I know there is no persuading you to devote yourself to such holy excesses: lest you should chance to be taken at your word, as some others have been. I hope at least I may, without offence, remind you not to hold back from applying in this way all your fasts, hair-girdles, disciplines, and other corporal afflictions; and in a word, all the evils you suffer in body or soul, whether they be voluntary or unavoidable. This I beg, as a most welcome alms to the poor souls in Purgatory, and a charity which will be of no little comfort to yourself. Do but as Magdalene and Martha did, when they saw their brother Lazarus locked up underground, and overwhelmed with earth. They wept and took on so bitterly, that they drew tears from our Blessed Saviour, and rescued their brother out of the jaws of death. They are your brothers whom I entreat for; they are prisoners underground. Christ Jesus has as tender a Heart as ever: give yourselves then to acts of contrition; let a tear steal now and then from your eyes; and haply sweet Jesus will be so well pleased to see them, that they may suffice to quench the flames of Purgatory; and possibly work a miracle there, in raising souls to life everlasting, and placing them above the firmament, that lie now, as it were, buried in that subterraneous lake of fire. But if you be so arid and barren, so niggardly, as not to afford them a tear, at least send them the sweet refreshment of a devout aspiration, or some short but vigorous ejaculatory prayer, which as a fiery dart you may be

[1] Bellarmine, Surius, Vitriaco.

still levelling at the Heart of Almighty God. Give them a good thought, or a cordial expression of sorrow, that you are not able to afford them the relief you could wish. Do never so little, so you do it with a good heart, and you will assuredly give them much ease in their implacable torments. The people of God were condemned to be cruelly massacred, or destroyed by fire, when Queen Esther, fetching but a deep sigh or two, and whispering but a few words into the ear of King Assuerus, did so charm him as to work the redemption of above a million of souls, who must otherwise have been delivered over to the fury of fire and sword. Are you so void of charity, or is the blood that runs in your veins, and feeds your heart, so frozen up, as not to yield one drop of compassion for God's people, who are most miserably handled by a most cruel inundation of Purgatory fire? If so, let us conclude that nature was deceived; for thinking to make you a man, she missed her aim, and made you a very tiger, void of all humanity and common civility.

It was a pious invention, that of certain Bishops and other ecclesiastical persons of Rome, A.D. 984,[1] to erect a sodality of those that should particularly devote themselves to pray for the dead: which custom continued a long time at Rome, and is yet extant in some parts of the Christian world. When one of their number dies, they all contribute their pious labours to help him out of Purgatory. I say, all; not only those who remain yet alive, but those

[1] Baronius, *An.* 987.

also who are already got into Heaven: so that it is impossible for him to make any long stay there. What a pleasure it is to see that a soul of this happy confraternity does no sooner enter into Purgatory, but a good part of Heaven and earth conspires to procure his enlargement! This is to be wise indeed; these are matters of state, which all the world should be well versed in, as importing them far more than the government of whole kingdoms. Methinks, you that read this should now long to spread abroad this most excellent devotion, by erecting one of these sodalities, which would be of so great advantage to yourself and others. Most part of mankind is so taken up with building rich houses, or providing stately tombs for their rotten carcasses, they have no leisure to think what will become of their souls, or in what a fiery mansion they are like to be lodged at their first appearance in the other world. Do they not in truth deserve to lie there, frying whole years, without mercy? they that had so little understanding, as not to endeavour the avoiding of an evil which alone deserves the name, if compared with the petty evils of this world, which are such bugbears in our weak-sighted apprehensions. A man that is undone by some cheat or surprise, may be pitied; but he that sees his own ruin, and will not stir a foot to prevent it, no creature can pity such a man: and, certainly, he deserves not the least compassion.

The world has generally a great esteem of Monsieur d'Argenton, Philip Commines; and many

worthily admire him for the great wisdom and sincerity he has laboured to express in his whole history. But, for my part, I commend him for nothing more than for the prudent care he took here for the welfare of his own soul in the other world. For, having built a goodly chapel at the Augustins in Paris, and left them a good foundation, he tied them to this perpetual obligation, that they should no sooner rise from table, but they should be sure to pray for the rest of his precious soul. And he ordered it thus, by his express will, that one of the religious should first say aloud: Let us pray for the soul of Monsieur d'Argenton; and then all should instantly say the Psalm *De profundis*. Gerson lost not his labour, when he took such pains to teach little children to repeat often these words: My God, my Creator, have pity on your poor servant, John Gerson. For these innocent souls, all the while the good man was dying, and after he was dead, went up and down the town with a mournful voice, singing the short lesson he had taught them, and comforting his dear soul with their innocent prayers.

Now, as I must commend their prudence who thus wisely cast about how to provide for their own souls, against they come into Purgatory, so I cannot but more highly magnify their charity, who, less solicitous for themselves, employ their whole care to save others out of that dreadful fire. And sure I am they can lose nothing by the bargain, who dare thus trust God with their own souls, while they do their uttermost to help others: nay, though

they should follow that unparalleled example of F. Hernando de Monsoy,[1] of the Society of Jesus, who, not content to give away all he could from himself to the poor souls, while he lived, made them his heirs after death; and by express will bequeathed them all the Masses, Rosaries, and whatever else should be offered him by his friends upon earth.

§ 5.—*Certain questions resolved, about the application and distribution of our suffrages.*

It will not be amiss here to resolve you certain pertinent questions. Whether the suffrages we offer up unto God shall really avail them for whom we offer them, and whether they alone, or others also, may receive benefit by them? Whether it be better to pray for a few at once, or for many, or for all the souls together? And for what souls in particular?

To the first I answer: If your intention be to help any one in particular, who is really in Purgatory, so your work be good, it is infallibly applied to the party upon whom you bestow it. For, as divines teach, it is the intention of the offerer which governs all; and God, of His infinite goodness, accommodates Himself to the petitioner's request, applying unto each one what has been offered for his relief. If you have nobody in your thoughts for whom you offer up your prayers, they are only beneficial to yourself; and what would be thus lost for want of application, God lays up in the treasury of the Church, as being a kind of spiritual waif or stray,

[1] *Rho. Hist.* l. i. c. 4, sec. 3.

to which nobody can lay any just claim. And, since it is the intention which entitles one to what is offered, before all others, what right can others pretend to it; or with what justice can it be parted, or divided among others, who were never thought of?

And hence I take my starting-point to resolve your other question: That if you regard their best advantage whom you have a mind to favour, you had better pray for a few, than for many together; for, since the merit of your devotions is but limited, and often in a very small proportion, the more you divide and subdivide it amongst many, the lesser share comes to every one in particular. As if you should distribute a crown, or an angel,[1] amongst a thousand poor people, you easily see your alms would be so inconsiderable, they would be little better for it; whereas, if it were all bestowed upon one or two, it were enough to make them think themselves rich.

Now, to define precisely, whether it be always better done to help one or two souls efficaciously, than to yield a little comfort to a great many, is a question I leave for you to exercise your wits in.

I could fancy it to be your best course to do both, that is, sometimes to single out some particular soul, and to use all your powers to lift her up to Heaven; sometimes, again, to parcel out your favours upon many; and, now and then, also to deal out a general alms upon all Purgatory. And

[1] A gold coin of that period, so called because it was stamped with the image of an angel.

you need not fear exceeding in this way of charity, whatsoever you bestow, for you may be sure nothing will be lost by it. And St. Thomas will tell you, for your comfort, that since all the souls in Purgatory are perfectly united in charity, they rejoice exceedingly when they see any of their whole number receive such powerful helps as to dispose her for Heaven. They every one take it as done to themselves, whatsoever is bestowed upon any of their fellows, whom they love as themselves: and, out of a heavenly kind of courtesy and singular love, they joy in her happiness as if it were their own. So that it may be truly said, that you never pray for one or more of them, but they are all partakers, and receive a particular comfort and satisfaction by it.

Methinks, this very consideration should enkindle in your hearts a fresh desire to be often solacing those happy souls, and to entitle yourselves their special benefactors, who will never suffer the remembrance of your tender mercies to be blotted out of their grateful memories.

But let us now state the case thus. Suppose you should employ another to do those good works for the souls, will they have the same effect as if you had done them yourself? Again, should this other, whom you thus employ, be an ungracious fellow, would all his endeavours be able to give any ease to the souls for whose sakes you procure them? I am so taken with the angelical doctrine of St. Thomas, that I will go no further for an answer. He tells us, then, that if you be good, and that

other be stark nought, by whom you procure the dirge, for example, to be said, or any other good work to be performed that can be performed, that can be done by a third person—for there be some that be personal—it does not at all wither the fruit of your devotion, nor obstruct the soul's benefit for whom you procured it: that, if he chance to be good, so much the better, the benefit will be the greater; though God look more upon the chief agent, and principal cause, than upon the accessory or instrument he thinks fit to make use of: that, if you be wicked yourself, and the other good, the good work will have its effect, and the soul will be assisted by it; that, if you should be both so unhappy as to be neither of you in the state of grace (excepting Mass only, which can never fail of its effect), all other means you use will be utterly void, and of no effect; because they proceed from so ungrateful hands, and worse hearts. Would you have God to accept of His enemies' presents? And, while you refuse to give Him your heart to seal with His Divine grace, would you have Him to deliver you up His, to dispose of His mercies, for the benefit of others? No, wicked wretch; no. Till you alter your condition, do not expect that God will appear in His mercy to bestow a Jubilee on those holy souls you entreat for. Nay, it falls out sometimes, even in this world, that the pleading of an infamous advocate, or a sworn enemy of the prince or State, makes the criminal's case more odious and desperate; and, in lieu of a gibbet, procures him a wheel, or a worse punishment. Yet

I must tell you, and I must conjure you by all the obligations of humanity that, be you never so lost a creature, never so covered with enormous crimes, you never fail at least to procure Masses, and to distribute liberal alms for the relief of the poor souls. And this for many reasons.

First, because the Mass is always to good purpose, as having its effect, *ex opere operato*, as the schoolmen speak; or of itself, without any relation had to him that says it, or causes it to be said.

Secondly, because it is agreed that the last wholesome advice we ought to give to a desperate soul, plunged over head and ears in sin, is, to be sure always to be good to the poor; for, sooner or later, good will come of it.

Thirdly, it is truly said of alms-deeds, that they are good solicitors, and have a most charming rhetoric, to obtain of God, and to extort, as it were, out of His hands, what they please. Insomuch that, if the sentence of condemnation were already signed in the hands of God, it is the expression of St. Chrysologus,[1] God Himself would tear it to pieces, and revoke the sentence, rather than refuse any favour to the merciful. "Give alms," says the Holy Ghost, "and hide it in the bosom of the poor, and your alms will intercede for you."[2] So that, although you, wicked wretch, cannot say a good prayer for the souls, yet your charity will supply your place, and plead for you: and the poor that partake of it will also pray for you; and all this may possibly be to good purpose. What your

[1] Serm. viii. [2] Ecclus. xxix. 15.

tongue cannot, your hand will perform with greater advantage; and what cannot proceed from your heart, which is poisoned with deadly sin, will out at your purse, which is full of mercy; and will help to purchase some comfortable refreshment, to take off the fury of those hungry flames which are incessantly preying upon the poor souls.

And here again, taking upon me to be proctor for this suffering commonwealth, I conjure you to be liberal in distributing your alms and procuring Masses for the souls departed. I can expect no less but that their Guardian Angels, or yours, or those of the poor, will inspire them with good thoughts, and move them to pour out their ardent and innocent prayers for you, in recompense of so great a charity. Meanwhile, you shall be like the crow that brought bread to St. Paul the Hermit, without so much as tasting it; or like the whale that conveyed Jonas safe to the shore, without feeding on him; or, to use St. Gregory's comparison, you shall be like the water in the Sacrament of Baptism, which, falling upon the head of a child, washes away the foul stain of original sin, and entitles him heir to the Kingdom of Heaven, and meanwhile glides away into some noisome sink, and there turns to filth and corruption.

Now to the last query: For what souls in particular we ought most to concern ourselves? I answer briefly thus: (1) Without question, all obligations of kindred, promise, gratitude, rule, command, &c., are to be served in the first place. (2) You cannot do better than offer up your devo-

tions for those souls which are dearest to God or His Blessed Mother. (3) It is a singular charity to remember those that are in most need, or most neglected. (4) It is a pious and laudable piece of spiritual craft, to do for those that will be soonest released; for by this means you shall send into Heaven good store of powerful advocates, who will incessantly plead for you before the throne of mercy.

§ 6.—*How dangerous it is to trust others with what concerns the sweet rest of our souls in the next world.*

As I cannot but highly magnify and extol their charity that have a solicitous care to rescue out of Purgatory the souls of their dear parents, friends, and acquaintance, so I cannot forbear deploring, and even laughing at, their folly and utter madness, as I may rightly term it, that leave all to the discretion of the heirs and friends they leave behind them. They must pardon me if I wrong them: it is the zeal of their good which transports me; it is a just indignation that sets my heart all on fire, to see how the wisest often prove the veriest fools in this occasion, which is the most important of all others. How many wills never see any other light but that of the fire which consumes them to ashes? How many false ones are daily forged, to fill up the others' room? How few do we see at this day punctually performed; or, rather, how many do we see not performed at all? Having procured a Mass or two of Requiem, and the dirge to be said, for decency' sake, and for the honour of their house,

who is there, almost, that will give himself any further trouble to pray even for his parents? The good man is scarce cold in his grave but his children fall together by the ears, run into endless suits, seize upon what they can next lay their hands on, right or wrong, and will not be persuaded to forego it but by main force of law, or by the terror of dreadful excommunications. One lays injustice to his father's charge, for doing so much to advance his eldest son's fortune; another cries out upon him for being so unnatural as to undo his own child. The daughters think it hard their portions are no greater; the whole house is up in arms, and in continual alarms; and, in a word, there is nothing but a mere confusion and hurly-burly amongst them. Meanwhile, the good man has leisure enough to sit at his task of suffering, and to lie frying in Purgatory: not so much as one of his children thinks on him, unless it be to brand him with some injurious reproach. The unfortunate soul almost killed himself with care, and had like also to have damned himself, to make his children happy in this world; and these barbarous harpies are so insatiable as to be raking at the bones, and gnawing at the very heart of their deceased father, who must needs be very sensible,[1] if he know it, to see himself so undutifully regarded by his own children. I will bring him in anon to speak for himself as best able to hold forth his own lamentable condition; and sure it will break your very heart to hear him. And yet, tell me seriously, does he not deserve all

[1] *i.e.* Must needs feel it very keenly.

this, who might so easily, when time was, have provided better for himself, and prevented all this mischief by obliging the Church to offer up good store of Masses for him; and who was so imprudent as to leave it wholly to the discretion of his heirs and executors, who are little better than direct barbarians? For is there any likelihood they will stir to help him out of Purgatory, they that cannot afford him a stone upon his grave worth a crown, with a little inscription to put good people in mind who lies there, that they may cast a good thought after him? But I shall have occasion yet to enlarge myself more upon this subject, and to make it appear what an irreparable folly is committed by the wisest in the world, in neglecting one of the most important affairs in their whole life.

It would go hard with many, were it true that a person who neglected to make restitution in his lifetime, and only charged his heirs to do it for him in his last will and testament, shall not stir out of Purgatory till restitution be really made, let there be never so many Masses said, and never so many satisfactory works offered up for him. And yet St. Bridget, whose revelations are for the most part approved by the Church, hesitates not to set this down for a truth which God had revealed unto her. Nor are there wanting grave divines that countenance this rigorous position, and bring for it many strong reasons and examples, which they take to be authentical: and the law itself, which says that if a man do not restore another's goods, there will always stick upon his soul a kind of blemish

or obligation of justice. And since the fault lies wholly at his door, he cannot, say they, have the least reason to complain of the severity of God's justice, but must accuse his own coldness and extreme neglect of his own welfare. Nay, even those that are of the contrary persuasion, yet maintain that it is not only much more secure, but far more meritorious, to satisfy such obligations while we live, than to trust others with it, let them be never so near and dear unto us; let it be your child, or your wife, or the very half of yourself, yet you ought not to trust your other half in this case, where we see men are so daily cozened in their expectations. And you that read this, and think to take so good order, that the like inconveniences cannot befall you, let me tell you, you are like to be one of the first that will be thus miserably cheated, and perhaps far worse than your neighbours, if you do not seek to discharge all these obligations while you are yet alive, and rather to-day than to-morrow. And, I beseech you, take the pains once more to read over this section. For it is unto you I direct my speech, or rather, it is God that speaks to you by my mouth. If you fail in it you will have cause to repent; for my part I hold myself discharged.

But now, to return from whence I have a little digressed, I told you that these last authors, though they do not believe that a soul shall be necessarily bound to dwell in Purgatory fire till restitution be made, yet they hold that it may accidentally fall out that she may be kept there far longer than she

would have been otherwise. For the creditors who have received their due, the poor you have made amends to, for what was wrongfully taken from them, and others well satisfied with your just proceedings, will make it their business to pray for your soul; for want of whose prayers you may lie, God knows how long, neglected and forgotten in that fiery dungeon. And believe it, let the first opinion be never so improbable in your judgment, it will not be very safe for you to lie in Purgatory till the case be decided, nor will it be your wisest course to learn there how egregiously you have played the fool in not clearing your debts sooner and providing better for the ease of your soul. I am clearly of the second opinion, but would advise you to make use of the first, that the one serving you as a bridle, the other may be as a spur, to incite you to that which doth more import you than the dominion of the whole world. You would be loth to be Emperor of the universe, upon condition to be perpetually tormented with the stone, or the gout, or to lie broiling upon a gridiron. And are you so wilfully unwary as to cast yourself into the flames of Purgatory upon a vain confidence that your friends or your children will fetch you out, who perhaps have scarce a thought of you once in a twelvemonth?

You have no reason in the world to expect others should love you better than you love yourself; so that if you can find in your heart to neglect yourself, it is a folly to expect others will have more care for you. Sure it is not good to go to Heaven by proxy,

nor to be beholden to another's courtesy in what concerns the necessary refreshment and ease of our souls. You that are so rich in worldly wealth, but bare enough of solid virtue, give but a tolerable excuse why you do not build a chapel or an hospital, that good people remembering their founder may be daily pouring out their prayers for you, both living and dead. That which you often cast away at an unlucky throw at dice, would be sufficient. That which you bury in a capricious piece of building, or devour at an idle entertainment, were more than enough. Why do not you get a privileged altar in your own parish, or at least cause frequent Masses to be said at such altars, to release poor souls, that others may be as kind to you hereafter? Why do not you send good store of alms to poor prisoners, that your charity may help to redeem souls out of Purgatory? You do nothing of all this, and yet would be thought to be in your right senses; which I look upon for my part as a mere paradox.

§ 7.—*Some motives, fetched even as far as the other world, to stir us up to be mindful of the dead.*

Cardinal Cajetan has a singular tenet, which will not a little help to promote piety, and deserves highly to be recorded as a doctrine which suits well with the infinite goodness of our most just and merciful God. The question is, What becomes of all those Masses and other suffrages which are offered for souls which are not in Purgatory? Some hold it is applied to their parents, alliance, or friends; others, to those that are so friendless as to have

nobody to remember them; others, to them that stand in most need of help; others will have it hoarded up with the rest of the Church's treasure. But this learned Cardinal maintains that it goes all to relieve their souls who in this world were particularly addicted to pray for the dead. And what can be more reasonable? According to the measure we deal out to others, it shall be measured to us again.[1] "Give, and it shall be given to you," says Almighty God.[2]

Who can lay a better claim to it than they? For, first, the founders themselves were they but half acquainted with what passes in the other world, cannot but be well pleased at it. Then, it is a powerful incentive to increase devotion in the hearts of all good Christians, who may hope in their turns to reap the like fruit of their charitable labours for the good of souls. And who can find fault that such straggling suffrages, which of right belong to nobody, should be so profitably employed? This opinion is no article of faith; but it is a very pious conjecture, worthy of that most eminent Cardinal. And methinks I see the blessed souls themselves, for whom these holy suffrages were offered, to lie prostrate before the throne of God, beseeching Him to apply them to those needy souls who while they lived were so full of charity as to forget themselves, to be sure to remember them.

Methinks I see the other Saints in Heaven who were handed out of Purgatory by the arms of charity, to be joint petitioners, and their good

[1] St. Matt. vii. 2. [2] St. Luke vi. 38.

Angels also, and all of them together to become earnest suitors to obtain this favour of Almighty God, Who is easily overcome in a suit of this nature, which is so rational that the gaining it must needs extol His ineffable wisdom and mercy. And I cannot but think that if the case were to be decided by the souls in Purgatory, they would all unanimously agree that such suffrages as these, which out of mere ignorance were misapplied to those who could make no benefit of them, cannot be better disposed of than to their companions who in their lifetime were so charitable to other souls. This I take to be a very moving consideration; and yet I have just cause to fear all I can say to you will hardly suffice to mollify that hard heart of yours, and therefore my last refuge shall be to set others on, though I call them out of the other world.

And first, let a damned soul read you a lecture, and teach you the compassion you ought to bear to your afflicted brethren. Remember how the rich glutton in the Gospel,[1] although he was buried in hell-fire, took care for his brothers who survived him, and besought Abraham to send Lazarus back into the world, to preach and convert them, lest they should be so miserable as to come into that place of torments. A strange request for a damned soul, and which may shame you, that are so little concerned for the souls of your brethren who are in so restless a condition.

In the next place, I will bring in the soul of

[1] St. Luke xvi. 27, 28.

your dear father, or mother, to make her own just complaints against you. Lend her, then, a dutiful and attentive ear; and let none of her words be lost; for she deserves to be heard out, while she sets forth the state of her most lamentable condition. Peace! It is a holy soul, though clothed in flames, that directs her speech to you after this manner.

"Am I not the most unfortunate and wretched parent that ever lived? I that was so silly as to presume that having ventured my life, and my very soul also, to leave my children at their ease, they would at least have had some pity on me and endeavour to procure for me some ease and comfort in my torments? Alas! I burn insufferably, I suffer infinitely, and have done so, I know not how long; and yet this is not the only thing that grieves me. Alas, no! it is a greater vexation to see myself so soon forgotten by my own children, and so slighted by them, for whom I have in vain taken so much care and pains. Ah, dost thou grudge thy poor mother a Mass, a slight alms, a sigh, or a tear? Thy mother, I say, who would most willingly have kept bread from her own mouth to make thee swim in an ocean of delights and to abound with plenty of all worldly goods? See how proudly this unnatural child struts up and down, as fine as hands can make him, as glorious as the sun; while I, his poor mother, have no other robes left me but scorching flames of fire! See how he empties my coffers, to cast it upon his horses and dogs, or upon men worse than either, and cannot find the heart to lay out a penny in charitable use for his poor

mother! His gold flies about the table, as nimbly as the dice he plays with; and in mere sport and merriment he throws away that which cost me a world of pains, and perhaps was the occasion of my death and my cruel confinement to this place of torments. He cannot afford me so much as a cup of cold water, wherewith to quench my flames; while he gluts himself with all superfluous and choice dainties. Am I not well served, for having had so little understanding and so little of common sense in me, as to trust this hard heart, without a spark of good feeling in it, to have the slightest sense of my deplorable condition? Who will not refuse me comfort, when my own children, my very bowels, do their best to forget me? What a vexation is it to me, when my companions in misery ask me whether I left no children behind me, and why they are so haggard-natured[1] as to neglect me? What can I say, or what answer can I make but this, that I thought I had brought forth children, but find them to be mere vipers and tigers? When I was upon my death-bed, struggling for life, these hypocritical children feigned themselves in despair: their pale looks, their counterfeit tears, their sighs, their sobs, their kind expressions, delivered in soft and smooth language, made me verily believe they loved me, and won me to play the fool thus, to rely upon them; when, God knows, they longed for nothing more than to close up my eyes, and were almost ready to burst for very grief that I died no sooner, that they might have sooner enjoyed the

[1] A haggard was a wild, untamed hawk.

goods I had scraped together, with the hazard of my life and poor soul too. I was willing to forget my own concerns, to be careful of theirs; and those ungrateful ones have now buried me in an eternal oblivion, and clearly left me to shift for myself in these dread tortures, without giving me the least ease or comfort. Oh, what a fool was I! Had I given to the poor the thousandth part of those goods which I left this miserable child, I had long before this been joyfully singing the praises of my Creator in the choir of Angels; whereas now I lie panting and groaning under excessive torments, and am like still to lie by it, for any relief that is to be looked for from this undutiful, ungracious child, whom I made my sole heir. Go, you mortals; go, hereafter, and trust your children, your kindred, and your heirs; that you may be treated by them as I am by my son, who was dearer to me than the very apple of my eye. Oh, it is the greatest piece of improvidence in the whole world, to rely upon the discretion of indiscreet or undutiful children, who would sooner be scuffling and tugging one another for a part of our inheritance, than striving to help us out of our pains. Sure, parents are either bewitched, or grown senseless, to hazard their souls for such untoward and ill-natured children, who have not a drop of good blood in their hearts, nor a grain of true filial love. But am I not all this while strangely transported, miserable that I am, thus to amuse myself with unprofitable complaints against my son, whereas indeed I have but small reason to blame any but myself, since it is I, and only I,

that am the cause of all this mischief? For did not I know that, in the grand business of saving my soul, I was to have trusted none but myself? Did I not know that, with the sight of their friends, at their departure, men use to lose all the memory and friendship they had for them? Did I not know that God Himself had foretold us, that the only ready way to build ourselves eternal tabernacles in the next world, is not to give all to our children, but be liberal to the poor? Did I not often hear it preached to me, that a cup of cold water sometimes happily bestowed was sufficient to put out Purgatory fire? Did they not as often ring in my ears, that a wise man sends his good works before him, and leaves them not for others to finish, as fools do, who by that means come to carry nothing with them but a shameful remorse, which lies like a viper at their breast, continually gnawing and devouring them? I cannot deny, then, but the fault lies at my door, and that I am deservingly thus neglected by my children. And were I disposed to wish harm to anybody, I would wish them no greater mischief than that their children should serve them just as they have served me; I say, that my ungodly offspring may come hither, and be as much neglected and forgotten as I am; and see, when it is too late, what it is to trust to the kindness of children, which is commonly buried in the same grave with their parents. It is one of my greatest miseries, that I have not the face to beg any comfort of God in my sufferings. For, whereas He clearly promised me all favour, so I would but be good to the poor,

I have done the clean contrary, putting more confidence in the uncertain performance of unworthy children than in the infallible truth of God's Word. The only comfort I have left me in all my afflictions is, that others will learn at my cost this clear maxim, not to leave to others a matter of so near concern as the ease and repose of their own souls, but to provide for them carefully themselves. O God, how dear have I bought this experience; to see my fault irreparable, and my misery without redress!"

One must have a heart of steel, or no heart at all, to hear these sad regrets, and not feel some tenderness for the poor souls, and as great an indignation against those who are so little concerned for the souls of their parents and other near relations. I wish, with all my soul, that all those who shall light upon this passage, and hear the soul so bitterly deplore her misfortune, may but benefit themselves half as much by it, as a good prelate did when the soul of Pope Benedict VIII., by God's permission revealed unto him her lamentable state in Purgatory.[1] For so the story goes, which is not to be questioned. This Pope Benedict appears to the Bishop of Caprea, and conjures him to go to his brother, Pope John, who succeeded him in the Chair of St. Peter, and to beseech him for God's sake to give great store of alms to the poor people, to allay the fury of the fire of Purgatory, with which he found himself highly tormented. He further charges him to let the Pope know withal, that he did acknowledge liberal alms had already been

[1] Baronius, *An.* 1024.

distributed for that purpose; but had found no ease at all by it, because all the money that had been then bestowed was acquired unjustly, and so had no power to prevail before the just tribunal of God for the obtaining of the least mercy. The good Bishop, upon this, makes haste to the Pope, and faithfully relates the whole conference that had passed between him and the soul of his predecessor; and with a grave voice and lively accents enforces the necessity and importance of the business: that, in truth, when a soul lies a burning, it is in vain to dispute idle questions; the best course, then, is to run instantly for water, and to throw it on with both hands, calling for all the help and assistance we can to relieve her: and that His Holiness should soon see the truth of the vision by the wonderful effects which were likely to follow. All this he delivers so gravely and so to the purpose, that the Pope resolves out of hand to give in charity vast sums out of his own certain and unquestionable revenue, whereby the soul of Pope Benedict was not only wonderfully comforted, but questionless soon released of her torments. In conclusion, the good Bishop, having well reflected with himself in what a miserable condition he had seen the soul of a Pope who had the repute of a Saint, and was really so, it worked so powerfully with him, that quitting his mitre, crozier, bishopric, and all worldly greatness, he shut himself up in a monastery, and there made a holy end, choosing rather to have his Purgatory in the austerity of a cloister than in the flames of the Church Suffering. I wish, again, they

would in this but follow the example of King Louis of France, who was son to Louis the Emperor, surnamed the Pious. For they tell us[1] that this Emperor, after he had been thirty-three years in Purgatory, not so much for any personal crime or misdemeanours of his own, as for permitting certain disorders in his Empire, which he ought to have prevented, was at length permitted to show himself to King Louis his son, and to beg his favourable assistance: and that the King did not only most readily grant him his request, procuring Masses to be said in all the monasteries of his realm, for the soul of his deceased father, but drew thence many good reflections and profitable instructions, which served him all his lifetime after. Do you the same; and believe it, though Purgatory fire is a kind of baptism, and is so styled by some of the holy Fathers, because it cleanses a soul from all the dross of sin, and makes it worthy to see God, yet is it your sweetest course here to baptize yourself frequently in the tears of contrition, which have a mighty power to wash away all the blemishes of sin; and so prevent in your own person, and extinguish in others, those baptismal flames of Purgatory fire, which are so dreadful.

[1] Baronius, *An.* 874.

THE FIFTH SURVEY.

HOW ALL ANTIQUITY WAS EVER DEVOTED TO PRAY FOR THE DEAD.

THIS charitable devotion for the dead is a thing so inbred and natural unto us all, that we seem, as it were, to suck it in with the very milk of our nurses: nor was there ever any people, I do not say Christian, but even Jewish, or heathenish, which did not profess some piety in this way.

As for the Jews, it is well known to be their constant practice this day, to pray for souls departed; and is confessed to be so by Purcas himself, and other modern Protestants. And what their custom was, when they had the privilege of being the only chosen people of Almighty God, the Scripture itself bears witness, especially where it relates the incomparable zeal which that valiant, invincible champion of Heaven, Judas Macchabeus,[1] had for the good of their souls, who had unfortunately been slain by their enemies. Take this story in brief, thus: Having in several fierce encounters made such a slaughter of his enemies, as to strew the field over with dead carcasses, and to stain the rivers with blood, he caused a diligent search to be made for all

[1] 2 Mach. xii. 39—46.

those that had fallen on his side, to have them honourably interred in the sepulchres of their fathers. But the mischief was, that in stripping them of their clothes, they discovered under their coats some unlawful spoils which they ought to have destroyed, according to their law, but had secretly reserved to themselves: a crime for which, they all instantly concluded, those unfortunate souls had deservedly been cast away, and cut off by the hand of God. And some there were, doubtless, that fell a cursing this their sordid avarice and high transgression; but the good captain takes this occasion to exhort them to adore the just judgments of Heaven, and to learn at the other's cost to have the fear of God before their eyes, and to be more religious in their ways; and yet withal to be more reserved in their censures, and rather to have pity on the souls of their fellow-soldiers, who probably might not die in so desperate a condition, as not to be relieved by their help. This done, he makes a collection: he raises a sum of twelve thousand drachms. He sends it to Jerusalem to procure sacrifices to be offered for their sins that were slain, who, for ought he knew, might die in a fair way to a hopeful resurrection. Now, which shall we first admire, the tender heart of this noble cavalier, or his religious piety, or his charitable liberality? He knew well, those miserable wretches had committed a foul crime; and yet he would not despair of their salvation; but was willing to believe they repented themselves of their frailty; and that God had sent them their deaths only as a temporal punishment,

for the terror of others. Nor had he the least doubt but that our Lord would be well pleased with his charity, and accept of the sacrifices which he thus offered for the repose of their souls. And certainly, the fact is most highly commended by the Sacred Text; which concludes the story in these words: "It is therefore a holy and healthful cogitation to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from their sins." Oh, that so fair an example would teach all Christians to be good and liberal to the dead! For, alas! the greatest part of mankind content themselves with drawing two or three sighs at a funeral, or saying a short prayer or two at most: whereas this generous captain, even before the clear light of the Gospel, did all this, and confirmed it with a noble gift of twelve thousand drachms.

§ 1.—*Of the natural instinct of all nations to honour and comfort the dead.*

It may well put most Catholics to the blush, to consider what an incredible care all nations have ever had of the dead, by the mere impulse of nature.

Cæsar takes notice[1] how superstitiously pious the ancient French were in this kind, who, together with the dead corpse, which they burnt upon a great pile of wood, were wont to consume all that had been precious and dear to him when he lived, as all his rich moveables, his dogs, his horses, nay, sometimes his very servants also, who took it for a great honour that they might be suffered so to

[1] *De Bello Gall.*

mingle their ashes with those of their dear lord and master. And does not the Roman history tell us[1] that, when Otho the Emperor had stabbed himself with a dagger, many of his soldiers were seen to do the like, to show the affection they had for their Prince, and how ready they were to sacrifice their lives for his honour and service? I know these customs were not only very extravagant, but extreme rude and barbarous: and yet they may serve to shame Christians, who are so far from expressing any such love for the souls of their friends, though they believe them to lie broiling in Purgatory. For what would not these others have done, or what would they not have given, to redeem the souls of their friends out of cruel torments, had they believed as much, since they were so prodigal as to sacrifice their goods, and their very lives, to their bare memories?

What shall I say of those other nations, whose natural piety led them to place burning lamps at the sepulchres of the dead, and strew them over with sweet flowers and odoriferous perfumes?[2] Do they not put Christians in mind to remember the dead, and to cast after them the sweet incense of their devout sighs and prayers, and the perfumes of their alms-deeds, and other good works?

It was very usual with the old Romans to shed whole floods of tears, to reserve them in phial-glasses, and to bury them with the urns, in which the ashes of their dead friends were carefully laid up; and by them to set lamps, so artificially

[1] Tacitus, *History*. [2] Herod. lib. 2.

composed as to burn without end. By which symbols they would give us to understand, that neither their love, nor their grief, should ever die; but that they would always be sure to have tears in their eyes, love in their hearts, and a constant memory in their souls for their deceased friends. Good God! shall charity be overcome by vanity? Shall religion yield to idolatry, and shall the Catholic Roman stoop to the Pagan Roman? Shall a little vainglory, or a mere natural affection, have the power to draw whole glassfuls of tears from the eyes of idolaters, and shall not a religious compassion prevail so far as to draw a single tear, or a sigh, or a good word, from the mouth of a Christian? Shall they take on so bitterly for dead carcasses, that are not sensible to the flames that consume them; and shall not we be more concerned for souls that really feel the smart of a most cruel fire? Sure, they will one day rise up in judgment against us and reproach us for believing as we do, and carrying ourselves clear contrary to the belief we profess.

They had another custom, not only in Rome, but elsewhere, to walk about the burning pile where the dead corpse lay, and with their mournful lamentations to keep time with the doleful sound of their trumpets; and still, every turn, to cast into the fire some precious pledge of their friendship. The women themselves would not stick to throw in their rings, bracelets, and other costly attires, nay, their very hair also, the chief ornament of their sex: and they would have been sometimes willing to have thrown in both their eyes and their hearts too. Nor

were there some wanting, that in earnest threw themselves into the fire, to be consumed with their dear spouses; so that it was found necessary to make a severe law against it: such was the tenderness that they had for their deceased friends, such was the excess of a mere natural affection.[1] Now, our love is infused from Heaven; it is supernatural, and consequently ought to be more active and powerful to stir up our compassion for the souls departed, and yet we see the coldness of Christians in this particular: how few there are that make it their business to help poor souls out of their tormenting flames. It is not necessary to make laws to hinder any excess in this article; it were rather to be wished that a law were provided to punish all such ungrateful persons as forgot the duty they owe to their dead parents, and all the obligations they have to the rest of their friends.

It will help something to increase our confusion to reflect how Alexander the Great behaved himself at the funeral of his dear Hephæstion.[2] They tell us he spent at least twelve thousand talents, that is, above seven millions and two hundred thousand crowns, upon his funeral pile. It was beautified with a world of rich and goodly statues, made of ivory, ebony, or some precious metal: amongst others, you might have seen curious mermaids, with exquisite music locked up within them; eagles, dragons, and other beasts, represented to the life; stately galleries hung with scarlet richly embroidered; triumphant crowns of pure gold; torches fifteen

[1] Suet. in Aug. Dion. Alex. [2] Diod. Sic. l. 17, c. 16.

cubits high; perfumes without end. Oh, what an excess of love and superfluity was this! what a stir, to make a handful of ashes of the carcass of a miserable wretch? And yet all this was nothing to the mad profuseness of that other infamous and desperate king,[1] who, while yet living, built his own funeral pile, and made himself and a world of treasure, to the value of fifty millions of gold, to be all consumed to ashes. What reflections shall we make upon all this; we that are scarce willing to spare a shilling to ease a soul that lies consuming in the flames of Purgatory?

Tell me, dear reader, what would they not have done for souls, they that bore so religious a respect to the bones, ashes, and small remainder of dead carcasses? They first clothed themselves with black cypress, washed their hands clean, quenched the fire with milk and wine; then they made a diligent search for the bones, carefully raking them up out of the ashes; they placed them in their bosoms, washed them with their tears and their choicest wines, dried them again, and lapped them up in their finest linen, covered them over with roses and other costly perfumes, and so reserved them in urns of glass, ivory, or porphyry; and could never think they had done enough for them. And can we Christians, with the eye of our faith, pierce the earth and see poor souls burning in Purgatory fire, and see them with dry eyes and with a frozen heart? Can we be so niggardly as to grudge them a little comfort, or refuse to cast on our wine, our milk, and our

[1] Diod. Sic. l. 3.

flowers: the wine of our charity, the milk of our innocency, and the flowers of our devout sighs and prayers, to help to quench their flames? Christ Jesus told the Jews, that the Queen of Saba would condemn them at the latter day; and I fear Queen Artemisia[1] will condemn us, forasmuch as, having built one of the seven miracles of the world in honour of her dear lord and husband, not content with this exterior demonstration of the dutiful affection she had for him, she took a strange resolution, to drink up his ashes and to lodge them in her heart; and so to make it good to the very letter, that man and wife are indeed but one flesh, one body and soul, have but one life, and can die but one death. What would she not have done to have lodged his soul in Heaven; she that took such care to lodge his ashes in her breast? What have you to say for yourselves, you unkind wives, or what answer can you make, you unnatural children, when she shall question you, what care you took to provide a better mansion for the souls of your husbands or your parents, when they were lodged in the merciless flames of Purgatory fire? Sure, you are not sprung from that wicked race of barbarous people, who were wont to feast themselves with the flesh of their dead parents, and to justify the fact by saying that it was better their bodies should be their meat than the meat of worms![2] I know this brutishness does not reign amongst us at this present; but, alas! there is another, not

[1] Strabo. l. 14. Diod. l. 16.
[2] Strabo. Val. Max.

unlike to it, which is much in fashion: for how many children gourmandize themselves with the riches of their parents, drink up the sweat of their brows, and devour their goods, without so much as dreaming what becomes of their souls; whether they broil in glowing fire, or starve in freezing cold? Cruel wretches! Is this the gratitude with which they honour their parents? Are they indeed children, or rather are they not direct vultures and tigers?

I should never make an end, should I go about here to reckon up all the religious expressions of charity which the pagans are known to have made to their dead friends; and therefore I say nothing of the ten valiant captains that were slain[1] for not fishing for the bodies of their soldiers and causing them to be buried, which was a crime they held unpardonable. I say as little of that pious custom of the Athenians, who would confer no honour or dignity but upon those who were well known to have been always very religious in burying their ancestors and honouring their tombs. I take no notice of a world of sacrifices, prayers, and ceremonies, which were constantly performed by the vestal virgins, priests, and whole pagan clergy; nor of the stately mausoleums, pyramids, colossuses, and other stately monuments which were built in honour of the dead. It grieves me to the very heart to consider that there are scarce any to be found in the whole world that make less reckoning of the dead than some loose and idle Christians: and I

[1] Xenoph. l. 1; Pausan. l. 2.

know not how to be better revenged on them[1] than to wish, that in punishment of their coldness and want of charity, they may be just so served by their successors as they dealt with their predecessors. It is the least they deserve, for neglecting a piety which they might have learnt of the pagans, and of the very beasts themselves; for some have been so curious as to observe in the ants, that in their little cells they have not only a hall and a granary, but a kind of churchyard also, or a place deputed for burying of their dead.

§ 2.—*The constant practice of the Church in all ages to pray for the dead.*

It is a pleasure to observe the constant devotion of the Church of Christ in all ages to pray for the dead. And first, to take my rise from the Apostles' time, there are many learned interpreters who hold that baptism for the dead, of which the Apostle speaks,[2] to be meant only of the much fasting, prayer, alms-deeds, and other voluntary afflictions which the first Christians undertook for the relief of their deceased friends. But I need not fetch in obscure places to prove so clear an Apostolical and early custom in God's Church.

You may see a set form of prayer for the dead prescribed in all the ancient liturgies of the

[1] The author, of course, uses this expression as a mere figure of speech. He had already put more charitable sentiments into the mouth of a mother speaking from Purgatory.

[2] 1 Cor. xv. 29.

Apostles.[1] Besides, St. Clement[2] tells us, it was one of the chief heads of St. Peter's sermons, to be daily inculcating to the people this devotion of praying for the dead: and St. Denis[3] sets down at large the solemn ceremonies and prayers which were then used at funerals, and receives them no otherwise than as Apostolical traditions, grounded upon the Word of God. And certainly it would have done you good to have seen with what gravity and devotion that venerable prelate performed the Divine Office and prayer for the dead, and what an ocean of tears he drew from the eyes of all that were present.

Let Tertullian speak for the next age.[4] He tells us how carefully devout people in his time kept the anniversaries of the dead, and made their constant oblations for the sweet rest of their souls. Here it is, says this grave author, that the widow makes it appear whether or no she had any true love for her husband, if she continue yearly to do her best for the comfort of his soul. To neglect so necessary a piece of service were to tell the world how she joys in his death, and was certainly long since divorced from him in affection. Believe it, all love is not expressed in setting out the solemnities of a noble funeral, hanging rooms in black, and shutting out the sun at noonday, to lie buried in darkness, nor appearing abroad with coach and lackeys all in complete mourning, howling and crying, and the

[1] Liturgia utriusque S. Jacobi, S. Math. S. Marci. S. Clem.
[2] Epist. i. [3] S. Dion. *Eccles. Hier.* c. 7.
[4] Tertull. *De Cor. Mil.* c. 3; *De Monogam.* c. 10.

like: there is often more ceremony or vanity in all this than love. It is all rather to amuse the world than to benefit the poor soul, who, God knows, has more need of other helps than these vain shows of pride and ostentation. All the day long you do nothing but whine and cry, that your dear husband is gone, and has left you such a debt, and so great a charge of children to provide for, that you know not which way to turn yourself: and all this while it is not in your thoughts what is become of this dear husband of yours, or what he suffers in the other world, and what need he has of better comfort than can spring from your unnecessary lamentations. Let your first care be, to ransom him out of Purgatory, and when you have once placed him in the empyrean Heaven, he will be sure to take care for you and yours. I know your excuse is, that having procured for him the accustomed services of the Church, you need do no more for him; for you verily believe he is already in a blessed state. But this is rather a poor shift to excuse your own sloth and laziness, than that you believe it to be so in good earnest. For there is no man, says Origen,[1] but the Son of God, can guess how long, or how many ages, a soul may stand in need of the purgation of fire. Mark the word, *ages:* he seems to believe that a soul may, for whole ages, that is, for so many hundred years, be confined to this fiery lake, if she be wholly left to herself and her own sufferings.

It was not without confidence, says Eusebius,[2]

[1] Lib. 8, *in Rom.* c. 11. [2] Euseb. lib. 4, c. 60, 71.

of reaping more fruit from the prayers of the faithful, that the honour of our nation, and the first Christian Emperor, Constantine the Great, took such care to be buried in the Church of the Apostles, whither all sorts of devout people resorting to perform their devotions to God and His Saints, would be sure to remember so good an Emperor. Nor did he fail of his expectation; for it is incredible, as the same author observes, what a world of sighs and prayers were offered up for him upon this occasion.

St. Athanasius[1] brings an elegant comparison, to express the incomparable benefit which accrues to the souls in Purgatory by our prayers. As the wine, says he, which is locked up in the cellar, yet is so recreated with the sweet odour of the flourishing vines which are growing in the fields as to flower afresh, and leap as it were for joy, so the souls that are shut up in the centre of the earth feel the sweet incense of our prayers, and are exceedingly comforted and refreshed by it.

We do not busy ourselves, says St. Cyril,[2] with placing crowns or strewing flowers at the sepulchres of the dead; but we lay hold on Christ, the very Son of God, Who was sacrificed upon the Cross for our sins: and we offer Him up again to His Eternal Father in the dread Sacrifice of the Mass, as the most efficacious means to reconcile Him, not only to ourselves, but to them also.

St. Epiphanius,[3] stuck not to condemn Arius for

[1] Q. 34, *ad Antiochum.*

[2] Cyril. Hieros. *in Catechesi* 5 *Mystag.* [3] *Heres.* 75.

this damnable heresy amongst others, that he held it in vain to pray for the dead; as if our prayers could not avail them.

St. Ambrose[1] prayed heartily for the good Emperor Theodosius, as soon as he was dead; and made open profession that he would never give over praying for him, till he had by his tears and prayers conveyed him safe to the holy mountain of our Lord, whither he was called by his merits, and where there is true life everlasting.

He had the same kindness for the soul of the Emperor Valentinian,[2] the same for Gratian, the same for his brother Satyrus, and others; he promised them Masses, tears, prayers, and that he would never forget them, never give over doing charitable offices for them. And much about this time it was[3] that some, out of too much care that the dead should, as soon as might be, have all the comfort they could afford them, were grown into an abuse of making no scruple of saying Mass for them after dinner; so that the Church made a severe decree against it.

"Will you honour the dead?" says St. Chrysostom; "do not spend yourselves in unprofitable lamentations; choose rather to sing psalms, to give alms, and to lead holy lives. Do for them that which they would willingly do for themselves, were they to return again into the world: and God will accept it at your hands, as if it came from them."

[1] St. Ambr. in Orat. in fun. Theodosii.

[2] Orat. in fun. Valent. et in fun. Satyr. [3] Conc. Carth. 3, can. 29.

St. Augustine is everywhere very full of this subject; but it may abundantly suffice here to set down a part of the ardent prayer which he made for his good mother after her death. "Hearken to me, I beseech Thee, O my God, for His sake Who is the true medicine of our wounds, Who hung upon the Cross, and, sitting at Thy right hand, makes intercession for us. I know she has willingly, and from her heart, forgiven such as offended her: forgive Thou also her sins, O Lord; forgive her, I beseech Thee, and enter not with her into judgment. Let Thy mercy overtop Thy justice," &c. "And I verily persuade myself that Thou hast already done what I desire; but yet accept, O Lord, this prayer, which I willingly make. For she, when the day of her death drew near upon her, did not crave that her body might be sumptuously adorned, or embalmed with spices and odours; nor desired she any curious or choice monument, nor cared she to be conveyed into her own country. They were not these things she recommended to us; but only she desired to be remembered at the altar, whereat she used to assist, without pretermission of any one day. Let her, therefore, rest in peace with her husband. And inspire, O Lord my God, inspire Thy servants, my brethren, that whosoever reads these my confessions, may at Thy altar remember Thy servant Monica, with Patricius, her husband," &c.[1]

St. Paulinus, that charitable prelate who sold himself to redeem others, could not but have a

[1] *Confess.* lib. 9, c. 13.

great proportion of charity for captive souls in the other world. No; he was not only ready to become a slave himself, to purchase their freedom, but he became an earnest solicitor to others in their behalf; for in a letter to Delphinus, alluding to the story of Lazarus, he beseeches him to have at least so much compassion as to convey now and then a drop of water, wherewith to cool the tongues of poor souls that lie burning in the Church which is all a-fire.

I am astonished, when I call to mind the sad regrets of the people of Africa when they saw some of their priests dragged away to martyrdom.[1] The author says, they flocked about them in great numbers, and cried out: "Alas! if you leave us so, what will become of us? Who must give us absolution for our sins? Who must bury us with the wonted ceremonies of the Church when we are dead? and who will take care to pray for our souls?" Such a general belief they had in those days, that nothing is more to be desired in this world than to leave those behind us who will do their best to help us out of our torments.

§ 3.—*A continuation of the same subject, from the sixth age after Christ unto our days.*

Almighty God has often miraculously made it appear how well He is pleased to be importuned by us in the souls' behalf, and what comfort they receive by our prayers. St. John Climacus writes,[2] that while the monks were at service, praying for

[1] Victor Utic. lib. 2, *De persec. Wandal.*
[2] In 4 *Gradu scalæ.*

their good Father Mennas, the third day after his departure, they felt a marvellous sweet smell to rise out of his grave, which they took for a good omen that his sweet soul, after three days' purgation, had taken her flight into Heaven. For what else could be meant by that sweet perfume, but the odour of his holy and innocent conversation, or the incense of their sacrifices and prayers, or the primitial fruits of his happy soul, which was now flown up to the holy mountain of eternal glory, there enjoying the odoriferous and never-fading delights of Paradise? Not unlike unto this, is that story which the great St. Gregory relates of one Justus, a monk.[1] He had given him up at first for a lost creature; but upon second thoughts, having ordered Mass to be said for him for thirty days together, the last day he appeared to his brother, and assured him of the happy exchange he was now going to make of his torments for the joys of Heaven.

Pope Symmachus[2] and his Council had reason to thunder out anathemas against those sacrilegious persons who were so frontless as to turn pious legacies into profane uses, to the great prejudice of the souls for whose repose they were particularly deputed by the founders. And certainly it is a much fouler crime to defraud souls of their due relief, than to disturb dead men's ashes and to plunder their graves. And yet we read of dead carcasses that have risen up in their graves, to struggle for their sheets with the wicked wretches who would have stolen them away. And it were

[1] *Dial.* c. 55, lib. 4. [2] 6 Synod. Rom.

to be wished, that more were permitted to do the like; and that souls might have leave to appear sometimes to those that abuse them so unconscionably! Haply they might fright them into reason, who might not be otherwise persuaded to do them right.

St. Isidore[1] delivers it as an Apostolic tradition, and general practice of the Catholic Church in his time, to offer up Sacrifices and prayers, and to distribute alms, for the dead: and this, not for any increase of their merit, but either to mitigate their pains or to shorten the time of their durance.

Venerable Bede is a sure witness for the following century, whose learned works are full of wonderful stories which he brings in confirmation of this Catholic doctrine and practice.

St. John Damascene[2] made an elegant oration, on purpose to stir up this devotion, where, amongst other things, he says it is impossible to number up all the stories in this kind which bear witness that the souls departed are relieved by our prayers: and that otherwise God would not have appointed a commemoration of the dead to be daily made in the unbloody Sacrifice of the Mass, nor would the Church have so religiously observed anniversaries and other days set apart for the service of the dead.

Were it but a dog, says Simon Metaphrastes,[3] that by chance were fallen into the fire, we should have so much compassion for him as to help him

[1] L. i. *De Offic.* c. 18, and l. 2, c. penult.
[2] Orat. Quod ii. qui, &c.
[3] In *Vita St. Pachom. St. Euseb.* &c.

out; and what shall we do for souls who are fallen into Purgatory fire? I say, souls of our parents and dearest of friends; souls that are predestinate to eternal glory, and extreme precious in the sight of God? And what did not the Saints of God's Church for them in those days? Some armed themselves from head to foot in coarse haircloth; others tore their flesh with chains and rude disciplines; some, again, pined themselves with rigorous fasts; others dissolved themselves into tears: some passed whole nights in contemplation; others gave liberal alms, or procured great store of Masses; in fine, they did what they were able, and were not well pleased that they were able to do no more, to relieve the poor souls in Purgatory. Amongst others, Queen Mechtild[1] is reported to have purchased immortal fame for her discreet behaviour at the death of the King, her husband, for whose soul she caused a world of Masses to be said, and a world of alms to be distributed, in lieu of other idle expenses and fruitless lamentations.

There is one in the world to whom I bear an immortal envy, and such an envy as I never mean to repent of. It is the holy Abbot Odilo, who was the author of an invention which I would willingly have found out, though with the loss of my very heart's blood.

Reader, take the story as it passed, thus.[2] A devout religious man, in his return from Jerusalem, meets with a holy hermit in Sicily; he assures him

[1] Luitprand. l. 4, c. 7. [2] Sigeb. in *Chron. an.* 998.

that he often heard the devils complain that souls were so soon discharged of their torments by the suffrages of the faithful, and particularly by the devout prayers of the monks of Cluny, who never ceased to pour out their prayers for them. This the good man carries to Odilo, then Abbot of Cluny; he praises God for His great mercy, in vouchsafing to hear the innocent prayers of His monks; and presently takes occasion to command all the monasteries of his Order to keep yearly the commemoration of All Souls next after the feast of All Saints, a custom which by degrees grew into such credit, that the Catholic Church thought fit to establish it all over the Christian world, to the incredible benefit of poor souls, and singular increase of God's glory. For who can sum up the infinite number of souls who have been freed out of Purgatory by this holy invention? Or who can express the glory which accrued to this good Abbot, who thus fortunately made himself procurator-general of the suffering Church, and furnished her people with such a considerable supply of necessary relief to alleviate the insupportable burthen of their sufferings?

St. Bernard[1] would triumph when he had to deal with heretics that denied this privilege of communicating our suffrages and prayers to the souls in Purgatory. And with what fervour he would apply himself to this charitable employment of relieving poor souls, may appear by the care he took for good Humbertus,[2] though he knew him to

[1] *Serm. 66 in Cant.* [2] *Serm. de obitu Humberti.*

have lived and died in his monastery so like a Saint that he could scarce find out the fault in him which might deserve the least punishment in the other world, unless it were to have been too rigorous to himself, and too careless of his health: which in a less spiritual eye than that of St. Bernard, might have passed for a great virtue. But it is worth your hearing that which he relates of blessed St. Malachy,[1] who died in his very bosom. This holy Bishop, as he lay asleep, hears a sister of his, lately dead, making lamentable moan, that for thirty days together she had not eaten so much as a bit of bread. He starts up out of his sleep; and, taking it to be more than a dream, he concludes the meaning of the vision was to tell him that just thirty days were now past since he had said Mass for her, as probably believing she was already where she had no need of his prayers. For this, indeed, is the ordinary excuse wherewith many use to cloak their idleness. "God be with him; he was a good soul: he is certainly in Heaven ere this; there is no more need to pray for him," &c.; whereas, God knows, Heaven is not so easily purchased as fools imagine. Howsoever, this worthy prelate so plied his prayers after this, that he soon sent his sister out of Purgatory; and it pleased God to let him see, by the daily change of her habit, how his prayers had purged her by degrees, and made her fit company for the Angels and Saints in Heaven. For the first day, she was covered all over with black cypress; the next, she

[1] In *Vita Malach.*

appeared in a mantle something whitish, but of a dusky colour: but the third day, she was seen all clad in white, which is the proper livery of the Saints. What think you now, says St. Bernard; is not the Kingdom of Heaven got by violence? Did not St. Malachy force it by storming? Were not his prayers like strokes of a warlike engine, to make a breach in Heaven, for his sister to enter at? Sweet Jesus! you that suffer this violence, are yourself the cause of it; the good prelate breathes nothing but what you have inspired him; so sweet are you in your mercies, so faithful in your promises, and so powerful in your Divine wonders. Thus far St. Bernard. But I cannot let pass in silence one very remarkable passage,[1] which happened to these two great servants of God. St. Malachy had passionately desired to die at Clarvallis, in the hands of the devout St. Bernard; and this on the day immediately before All Souls' day: and it pleased God to grant him his request. It fell out, then, that while St. Bernard was saying Mass for him, in the middle of Mass it was revealed to him that St. Malachy was already glorious in Heaven; whether he had gone straight thither out of this world, or whether that part of St. Bernard's Mass had freed him out of Purgatory, is uncertain: but St. Bernard hereupon changed his note; for having began a Requiem, he went on with the Mass of a Bishop and Confessor, to the great astonishment of all the standers-by. Oh, it is good to have such devout Masses said presently after

[1] *i.e.* Event.

one's death! It is good to die in so good hands, as will not quit you till they have conducted you to the choir of Angels!

St. Thomas of Aquin, that great champion of Purgatory, gave God particular thanks at his death, for not only delivering a soul out of Purgatory, at the instance of his prayers, but also permitting the same soul to be the messenger of so good news.

Durand[1] argues the case thus: Sure, Christian charity has more power with Almighty God than a mere natural friendship can have with the civil magistrate; now, it has been often seen, that a condemned person has been quit, at the earnest entreaty, or voluntary satisfaction, of his friends. Stories are full of such courteous civilities. How can we then make any question but that God will as easily be moved to release holy souls out of Purgatory, at the sweet importunity of their friends' tears, prayers, and sufferings here upon earth? It was a laudable custom in some countries, that if a chaste virgin should present herself at the place of execution, to beg a felon for her husband, her request was granted, and the poor criminal was with great joy instantly conveyed from the gallows to a nuptial feast. This custom, though now out of date, may yet serve to tell us, that Almighty God will not deny to set a soul free from the punishment of all its misdemeanours, if we beg it earnestly at the hands of His infinite mercy.

And now we are come down to the fifteenth age, where the Fathers of the Council of Florence,

[1] In 4, d. 45.

both Greeks and Latins, with one consent, declare the same faith and constant practice of the Church, thus handed down to them from age to age, since Christ and His Apostles' time, as we have seen: viz., that the souls in Purgatory are not only relieved, but translated into Heaven, by the prayers, sacrifices, alms, and other charitable works which are offered up for them according to the custom of the Catholic Church. Nor did their posterity degenerate, or vary the least, from this received doctrine, until Luther's time, when the holy Council of Trent thought fit again to lay down the sound doctrine of the Church, in opposition to all our late sectaries. And I wish all Catholics were but as forward to lend their helping hands to lift souls out of Purgatory, as they are to believe they have the power to do it: and that we had not often more reason than the Roman Emperor to pronounce the day lost, since we let so many days pass over our heads, and so many fair occasions slip out of our hands, without easing, or releasing, any souls out of Purgatory, when we might do it with so much ease.

THE SIXTH SURVEY.

OF TWELVE EXCELLENT MEANS TO PREVENT PURGATORY, OR SO TO PROVIDE FOR OURSELVES AS NOT TO MAKE ANY LONG STAY THERE.

BEHOLD the most important point of all others, the secret of secrets, and the true knack of all state affairs in this world. They talk of certain waters, which have so strange a power to dull the edge of fire, that if one wash his hands with them, he can receive no prejudice, though he should thrust them afterwards into the fire or into boiling lead. The preservatives I am here to treat of, are of a higher nature; they do not curb the restless activity of this our sublunary fire, which is bent only against dull bodies, but they arm us against the raging fire of Purgatory which God has prepared to torment our very souls in the other world.

§ 1.—*The first, Perfect Contrition.*

One of the surest means to avoid Purgatory, is to die with tears in our eyes and true contrition in our hearts. For divines[1] teach that our contrition may be so great, as to wash away all those spots of sin which Purgatory fire was otherwise to have

[1] St. Thomas, *Suppl.* q. 5. a. 3.

worn off. And therefore, as I take it to be a great piece of folly to defer the exercise of so precious an act unto the hour of our death, so I esteem it one of the most solid devotions of all others, to accustom ourselves to it all our lifetime: that, by daily frequenting such acts, we may at length get such a habit and facility in them, as, with God's grace, to have them at our call when we come to die. All must not look for the same privilege which the Good Thief had at the last gasp. It was but little that he said; but he spoke it with so cordial an accent, that he deserved to hear those comfortable words of our Blessed Saviour: "This day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise;" and soon found them verified by a present fruition of the Beatifical Vision. Almighty God is pleased sometimes to make so forcible an entry into the heart of man, and to set it so desperately on fire with His Divine love, that there is no remedy but to die between the arms of love and grief; and thrice happy are those souls that lose their lives in this Divine encounter, and die in the most loving flames of ardent charity; they are sure never to feel the murdering flames of Purgatory. Such was the death of our Blessed Lady, St. John the Evangelist, and infinite others, who have been straight carried into Heaven out of this world on the wings of love or contrition; so that a heart that is well seasoned with contrition, or steeped in a bath of salt tears, is like the heart of Prince Germanicus,[1] which being washed over with a certain precious liquor, could not be con-

[1] Tacitus. *Ann.*

sumed by the fire which turned all the rest of his body to ashes.

This is what they call a good *peccavi;* but it must be a good one indeed: but it is not every ordinary and trivial kind of sorrow which can work such wonders. Those that have been long used to actuate themselves in those generous acts of contrition, may be full of confidence that the mercy of God will not fail them at the hour of their death; and that their good Angels will be then ready, when it most imports, to inspire them with all the best motives of true contrition: since they have gone all along with them, still furnishing them with such good thoughts, and so much good success, that their hearts have been a thousand times broken with a lively, a loving, and cordial contrition and repentance for their sins. And certainly they that die either in the fire of so ardent a love or in the water of so piercing a grief, need not fear the fire of Purgatory; for that fire, says St. Bonaventure, was not made for them. So that, methinks, this charity may be fitly compared to the Seraphim at the gates of Paradise, brandishing his flaming sword, which Tertullian[1] calls the porter of Paradise: grief is the edge, love the fire, wherewith it is inflamed; and he that has this flaming sword, has Heaven's gates at command, and goes straight thither when he leaves the world.

[1] Romphæa janitrix Paradisi.

§ 2.—*The second, to die in Religion.*

Another safe way to escape Purgatory is to live and die in a good Religious Order, and at his death to renew and ratify his religious vows. To prove this,[1] I first call St. Bernard to witness, who doubts not to assure us that there is a ready, if not an uninterrupted passage into Heaven out of a religious cell. 2. Next I appeal to those holy and learned Doctors who give it for a certain sign of predestination to die in Religion; because Christ has in a manner sworn, in His holy Gospel,[2] to give a hundred-fold and life everlasting to all those that shall leave father, mother, and other worldly concernments for His sake. For whence it is that Holy Church permits the Superiors of divers Religious Orders to make this solemn promise at the profession of their novices, for they have no sooner made their vows of poverty, &c., but the Superior answers, "And I, child, do promise thee Paradise and eternal life."

3. Many Popes have granted a Plenary Indulgence,[3] in form of a Jubilee, to all religious persons that either by word of mouth, or in their hearts, call upon the sacred names of Jesus and Mary at the hour of their death. And what religious person is there that does it not, either when he dies or not long before, not only once but a thousand times?

To say nothing that many are of opinion that they gain this Indulgence at the hour of their death,

[1] *Ad Fratres de Monte Dei.* A cella in cœlum, &c.
[2] Plat. *De Bono stat. Relig.* [3] Sixt. Greg. XIII. Greg. XIV.

whether they pronounce the words or no.[1] For, as other Indulgences are gained by visiting certain churches, saying certain prayers, giving alms, or exercising such other acts of virtue, the Supreme Pastor of the Church thought no act more worthy of a Jubilee than to die in a Religious Order, in the actual profession of voluntary poverty, chastity, and obedience; with final perseverance in the austerity of a religious life, and a patient acceptance of our death, as from the holy hand of God. Let us, then, suppose a good religious man to come to die; and besides the common benefit of the sacraments, and other holy rites of the Catholic Church, let him gain this Plenary Indulgence which the Popes grant as freely and with as much assurance as any other; have we not all the reason in the world to hope that he goes immediately into Heaven, or at most, does but make a swift passage through Purgatory, or rather, as we read of many in the Ecclesiastical History, takes it in his way, to have the company of some of his friends there, whom he has the privilege to lead away with him in triumph into Heaven?

4. Who can better deserve to go directly into Heaven than they whose lives are a continual Purgatory? They go in rough hair-shirts, pine themselves with rigorous fasts, tear their flesh with cruel disciplines, drink up their own tears, live on nothing but mortifications and perpetual hardships, and thus abundantly satisfy for all the sins they have

[1] It must be said in the heart, if it cannot be said with the lips, as well by Religious as by all the faithful.

committed, and for those they never dreamt of, but had rather die a thousand times than commit. They that have no will but that of their Superior, they that breathe nothing but holy sighs, and burn with ardent charity, how can they burn in Purgatory fire?

5. Divines furnish me with another pregnant proof, and it is this. It is certain, say they, that a solemn profession in Religion brings with it a Plenary Indulgence or remission of all their sins, not only because it is a second baptism, or a lingering kind of martyrdom, which is not completed in a few moments as other martyrdoms are, but also, because in the opinion of the Angelical Doctor,[1] it is so sublime and eminent an act as surpasses all other acts in this life; so that if Daniel (says he) could say, that by giving a little alms we may blot out our sins, what may we not say of this supereminent act of liberality, by which a man gives unto God all his goods and present possessions, with all fair hopes of improving them, his body, his life, his honour, his will, his soul, with a million of worlds, if he had them in his power? The same holy Doctor says elsewhere, that a man who sacrifices his will unto God, the most noble portion of his soul, and makes it to become His eternal slave, gives God full satisfaction for all his misdemeanours: since a mere creature cannot present Him with a more noble gift, than to make Him an entire holocaust of that which is dearest unto him in this world, which is his will, and the absolute sovereignty over himself and all his concerns. Others[2] go yet

[1] 2. 2. 4. ult. a. 3. [2] Suarez, *Verb. Religio*, n. 27, &c.

further, and assure us that as often as a good religious man renews this his profession he makes a new purchase of the same favour, and obtains an entire pardon of all the pain due to his sins, and that these, and the like privileges, are not tied only to solemn vows, but are common to all vows that make up the substance of a religious man, of what Order soever in God's Church. And they say withal, that these favours are not in the nature of Indulgences granted by His Holiness, but are inseparably annexed unto the vows themselves, which are so generous and so precious acts in the sight of God, that they move His goodness to blot out the remembrance of their sins, and to cancel a great part, if not all, the pain which was due for them.

Now, put all this together, and it will necessarily follow that since the Pope, on the one side, grants a Jubilee unto all Religious at the hour of their death, and since they have it in their power, on the other side, to renew their vows before they die, by which act they may fully satisfy for all their sins, there cannot be a greater assurance of going directly into Heaven than theirs, who have, as I told you, this double security of a general pardon, that so, one way or other, they can scarce fail to obtain it.

What shall I say now of their perfect resignation unto the will of God, their invincible patience, their love of God, their virginal purity, their exact and punctual obedience, with a million of other Divine acts of virtue, which are so incident and connatural to a religious vocation. All of which, no

doubt, stand ready to assist them at the last hour, and to show them Heaven's gates open and ready to receive them; and, howsoever, to assure them that their stay cannot be long in Purgatory, since they leave behind them so many of their own Order, who will be sure to ply them with Masses, Indulgences, and other charitable works, for their speedy deliverance.

§ 3.—*The third, to be an Apostolical Preacher.*

A third means to redeem Purgatory is, be a zealous and apostolical preacher. For, as this is a life of eminent perfection and incredible merit, so is it extreme painful, and may well pass for a Purgatory in this life. But observe, that I speak of an apostolical preacher, or of one that is full of Divine fire or a holy zeal for the good of souls. I mean not those that preach themselves, those that desire to be admired and adored for oracles, those that profane the Word of God with their vain glosses, idle applications, and affected eloquence, seeking nothing more than worldly applause, and really destroying by their life and conversation all they build up in the pulpit. St. Paul compares such vain preachers to cracked trumpets and broken bells, which make a noise indeed, but are altogether useless. They send others to Heaven, said St. Xaverius, and go God knows whither themselves. St. Gregory likens them to the waters of Baptism, which entitles children to the Kingdom of Heaven, and is itself conveyed into some noisome sink, and there turns to corruption. I speak, then, of a preacher who is

a man of God, one that does what he says, and says what he does; one that aims at nothing but the salvation of souls, preaches to a few or to many, in cities or villages, princes' courts, or poor hospitals, with the same fervour of spirit; one that rends their hearts asunder, and draws floods of tears from their eyes; one that preaches like another St. Paul, and draws his sermons out of the Pentateuch of the five Wounds of his Redeemer; one that, after he has done all he can, believes he is an unprofitable servant, unworthy to open his mouth, or to tread upon the earth. Such a one, in my opinion, if he dies in the exercise of his holy function, either goes not at all to Purgatory, or stays not there. This was the case of one Cherubini,[1] a famous preacher of the Order of St. Francis, who before he died had the comfort to see St. Hierome, whom he had chosen for his peculiar patron, and with him three thousand souls, all saved by his means, who assured him that they were sent expressly by Almighty God to carry him into Heaven, and so to requite him for showing them the way thither in his zealous sermons. Not unlike unto this, is that story which I touched elsewhere, out of Cardinal Baronius. He tells us that St. Boniface[2] saw a holy abbot at his death, surrounded with devils, and much terrified to see them so insolent as to cry out his soul was theirs: when, behold! his good Angel appears at the head of a white troop of blessed souls, who, after a solemn profession that they had all been saved

[1] *Hist. St. Fran.* l. 7, c. 2, p. 3.
[2] *Annal. Eccl.* an. 716.

by him, gave him the comfort to understand they had brought an express commission to convey him instantly into Heaven. But you long now to have me paint you out such a preacher; for, though there be many that sooth themselves up with a vain persuasion that they are the men, yet, if we sift a little narrowly into them, we should possibly find so much vanity, so much care of esteem, so many by-ends, and so many other imperfections to steal into their sermons, that we may safely say there are but few apostolical preachers indeed, and such as seek only God's cause and the good of souls.

Take an exact idea from one that lived but in the last age. Father Gonzales Silveria, of the Society of Jesus, scarce ever went up into the pulpit without a hair-shirt, and would say a man must be well armed who goes to fight against vice. It was also very usual with him to encounter Goliath with David's sling; to take a bloody discipline, and so to mount up into the pulpit, and there, like thunder, to carry all before him. He had for the most part but five books for his library: to wit, his Breviary, the Bible, the Lives of Saints, a crucifix, and the picture of our Blessed Lady. In these five books he studied for his sermons: and certainly the thunder-bolts of his admirable eloquence were framed in the Heart of his Crucified Lord, the best furnace of Divine love; the sweet flowers of his rhetoric were steeped in the milk of the Virgin; his tropes and figures, and the whole variety of his sermons, were borrowed out of the Word of God and the admirable lives of His Saints; and lastly,

the religious and devout performance of his daily task of Divine Office and Holy Mass, gave fire to his discourses, wherewith he did not only heat, but inflame the hearts of his auditors. He would preach you twice or thrice a day, and do it the more willingly in the meanest places and to the poorest people. His common lodging was the hospital, where he contented himself with a spare diet and gross fare; he was never observed to be over-nice and coy of his sermons, nor required he much time to make them with applause. The only thing he had before his eyes was the glory of God and the help of souls; and his life preached more than his tongue, for he really acted more in his own person than he taught others. As for his manner of preaching, it was rather powerful than charming, fitter to break their hearts than please their ears. Such was his fervour, that he poured his whole heart, and his whole zeal, out of his mouth; and he would be so transported with this zeal as not to take notice of anything else. Once, as he was preaching, he struck his hand upon a sharp nail which stuck out in the pulpit, and made it bleed so extremely, that the whole auditory took notice of it, and some of the devout women courteously offered their handkerchiefs to bind up the wound and stop the bleeding: and all this while the good man neither saw handkerchief, nor nail, nor blood, nor took the least notice of anything till after his sermon, when, the wound being grown cold, he was heard to wonder how the blood came there, and to complain that his hand put him to some pain.

Another time, preaching in the Queen of Portugal's chapel, he had put himself into such a heat that, his mouth being clammed up, he could scarce get out his words, when the Queen, perceiving it, called for an ewer of water, which was instantly brought and presented by the young Princess; but the man of God was so rapt in his devout thoughts, that he saw neither the ewer nor the Princess, nor the Queen: so that they were forced to pull him by the sleeve, that the Princess Royal might not stand thus waiting on him with the ewer in her hand; and then the Queen herself prayed him to make use of the water to cool and refresh his dry mouth. With much ado, the good Father came to himself, and, rising up, made a low obeisance to the Queen and Princess, thanked them for their care, excused himself for being so uncivil as not to mind them; but for all this would not take a drop of water, but went on with his sermon, to the great wonder and edification of all the standers-by. This, this is to preach like a man full of God's Spirit, like one that has his heart so transported with zeal, and his eyes so bent upon moving his auditors, that he can see nothing else. And would you have such a fiery man as this be condemned to Purgatory, one that has so much charity for others that he forgets himself, and distils out his life into blood, sweat, and tears, and is consumed in the fire of charity, which is the sweet Purgatory of the servants of God?

§ 4.—*The fourth, to serve the Infected.*

Those that charitably expose themselves to serve the infected, and so come to get the plague, and to die in the service, freely giving away their lives to save others, may have a great confidence that they have served out, if not all, at least the greatest part of their Purgatory. For, since an act of contrition or of perfect charity has power to make a soul instantly fit for Heaven, as it falls out in martyrdom, why may we not hope that the same privilege follows these charitable souls we speak of, who, though they die not by the hands of a bloody executioner, yet are cut off by a martyrdom of incomparable charity? Christ our Saviour said, that the greatest charity that a man could have in this life, was to give his life for his friends: where, by the way, St. Bernard notes, that His charity must needs be greater than the greatest, since He gave His Divine Life, not only for His friends, but even for His enemies. What shall we then think of their charity who voluntarily sacrifice their lives for infected persons, whether friends or enemies, acquaintance or no acquaintance, rich or poor; and do it generously, dying a thousand deaths for fear, danger, and pain, before they come to die in good earnest? Does not the Church list them amongst other Saints in the Roman Martyrology? Does she not keep their feast, and make an honourable commemoration of their glorious death, on the 28th day of February? Does she not withal tell us, that the faithful devout people were accustomed to honour

them as martyrs? Would you, then, have these kind of martyrs, who die in the fire of charity, go to Purgatory? To what purpose? To metamorphose it into Heaven? For if a maiden, who is violently dragged away to some vile place, which is a kind of hell, where massacre is made of immortal souls, in the opinion of St. Ambrose, changes it into a kind of heaven, what can we think of those charitable souls, but that, if they were conveyed into the suffering Church, they would suddenly change it into a Church triumphant? Hear a comfortable story to this purpose. One Damian, of the holy Order of St. Francis,[1] had devoted himself to serve those that lay sick of the plague, with a burning desire to give them all the comfort he could by his charitable visits. St. Francis met him one day, and said: My son, didst thou but know what a crown in Heaven is prepared for thee, in reward of this charity of thine, thou wouldst be out of thyself for mere joy; go on, in God's name, for it will not be long before thou art translated into Heaven, to eternal glory. The good friar continued the employment, till one day, being in fervent prayer, he rendered up his happy soul into the hands of his Creator. Can you now believe that a man that sacrifices a good part of his life on the altar of the highest charity, which is in the world next unto martyrdom itself, one that loses his own life to make others live, and dies in the flames of a devout prayer; that this man, I say, goes to Purgatory? Or, rather, do you not believe that Heaven stoops

[1] *Annal. St. Fran.*

to take him up, and to crown him with immortal glory?

Eusebius[1] takes a pleasure to relate the high esteem they had of those good priests, deacons, and secular persons, who thus exposed themselves to the plague, and sometimes were seen to tumble into the same graves where they had newly laid others. The fiery furnace, says St. Chrysostom,[2] was so astonished to see those three innocent creatures there, that it durst not touch them, but vented all its fury against the cords and fetters which bound them. Let us, then, suppose these holy souls to be cast into the furnace of Purgatory, who chose rather to forsake their lives than to forsake poor infected and forlorn creatures; can we imagine anything less, than that those subterraneous flames should yield and with reverence submit unto the flames of Heaven, which have already seized on those holy souls? and that they should say with Ecclesiasticus: "Thou hast delivered me, according to the multitude of Thy mercy, . . . from the oppression of the flame which surrounded me, and in the midst of the fire I was not burnt."[3] What! Shall purity have the power to resist fire, so that many chaste virgins have received no harm by it, and shall not charity in its perfection be as good a preservative against the fire of Purgatory?

[1] Lib. i. c. 20. [2] *Hom. de tribus pueris.*
[3] Ecclus. li. 4, 6.

§ 5.—*The fifth, a tender Devotion to the Blessed Virgin.*

I cannot be persuaded that a soul, truly devoted to the honour and service of the Mother of God, can be long detained in Purgatory, if she go thither at all. For how should this be? Does our Blessed Lady want power? she that can do all things, says St. Anselm; or charity? she that has no feelings but of charity; she that has a heart so tender, that though you suppose a heart to be made up of all the mothers' hearts in the world, it could not be more tender than hers, which is all sweetness and tenderness. St. Bridget had a son, who lived not so good a life as to look for Heaven without passing through Purgatory. This great servant of God, who was not without the emotion of a loving mother, casts about how to save the poor youth, who was grown careless enough of himself. She resolves, therefore, to offer him up to the Blessed Virgin, and to trust her entirely with his salvation. She undertakes the trust, and carries it on so happily that, in fine, she saves him, and at the hour of death takes up his soul into Heaven. This she did, by first working him to a perfect act of contrition, which imped[1] his wings for Heaven, and then cutting off the thread of his life, which should have held out one day longer; so that the devil, finding himself thus cozened, made his complaint to God, the just Judge of the world, Who returned this

[1] "Imp," to graft, to splice a falcon's broken feathers. (Shakespeare).

answer: "Know that My Mother is Lady and Queen of Heaven, and therefore has liberty to place there whom she pleases; and what she does in this kind is well done, and pleasing in My sight." There is a world of examples of the like favours graciously showered down from the Mother of Mercy, who has often taken the pains to conduct her good children and faithful servants into Heaven. And when it stands not with God's justice but that a soul must go into Purgatory, what does she not to help it out? as well by her own powerful intercession, which she will be sure to interpose, as far as it may stand with the just degrees of Heaven, as by the prayers of her devout servants, into whose hearts she inspires a thousand good thoughts of tenderness for their souls, who were particularly devoted to her. How many Divine consolations and refreshments does she send them by their good Angels? And, since it is certain that she goes sometimes to visit them on their death-beds, why may we not piously imagine that she gives them the like comfortable visits, when they lie tied to their beds of fire in cruel torments? The lioness and the tigress, though never so fierce by nature, will leap into the fire to save their young ones, or perish there. God forbid we should make any comparison between the Blessed Virgin, Mother of the Lion of Juda, and these wild beasts; and yet, since we must allow so much tenderness to such cruel and savage mothers, we may not doubt but that the Mother of Mercy, seeing her beloved children in the fire of Purgatory, will fly thither to fetch them out.

The devout and learned Richard of St. Victor,[1] commenting upon these words of the Psalmist, "He shall not be confounded when he shall speak to his enemies in the gate," tells us that this gate is the Blessed Virgin; to appear at the gate, is to die and to be cited to Particular Judgment, where nobody, says he, is ever confounded that finds but this gate favourably open; and to whom should the Mother of God be favourable, but unto those that were constant in her service? And from what confusion does she deliver them, but from the dreadful fire of Hell and Purgatory? O God, what assurance have we, when the Queen of Heaven is pleased to plead for us, and to procure us a favourable sentence; and since it is her well beloved Son that is to be our Judge, Who denies her nothing, what may we not hope for? When St. John Damascene had lost his hand, he begged it again of the Queen of Heaven,[2] and his suit was instantly granted, so sure it is that she denies nothing to her dear children. What favours then may not a devout soul look for at her hands, when it departs out of this world?[3] If Mary hold thee by the hand, fear not falling, cries St. Bernard;[4] for, if she be propitious, thou art sure to have thy share in the Kingdom of Heaven. Now, to whom will she be propitious, if not to those that, while they lived, breathed nothing but her love and service; and

[1] Psalm cxxvi. 5; Rich. c. 39 *in Cant.*
[2] Sur. in ejus vita: Metaphrast.
[3] Bern. Serm. i. sup. Missus est.
[4] "Maria tenente non corruis," &c.

when should she show herself more our friend than when we are threatened with Purgatory fire, which burns so dreadfully?

The holy Abbot Guericus[1] had reason to wish rather to be lodged in the bosom of the Blessed Virgin than in Abraham's bosom. Oh, it is no small security to be under her protection, though it were but under her feet: for who should fetch a soul thence, to throw it into Purgatory? God the Father? How? Out of the hands of His beloved daughter? Who then? God the Son? How, from His beloved Mother? Who then? God the Holy Ghost? What, from His dearest Spouse? Who then? St. Michael with his sword and buckler? That were pretty, that a creature should attempt what the Blessed Trinity forbears out of love to the Mother of God. Who then? The devil? What! the serpent, whose head she crushed under her feet, or any of his fellows, who tremble at the very sound of her name? No; there is not the creature dare meddle with a soul that is once sheltered under the royal mantle of her protection. So true it is, that one of the best preservatives against Purgatory, is to be very devout to the Blessed Virgin, Mother of God.

But it must be more than an ordinary devotion: as, to make a vow of chastity in her honour; to devote oneself entirely to her; to do her some signal piece of service; to call often upon her, and with a filial confidence; to build a goodly chapel, or some house where she may be served to the world's end; to give liberal and frequent alms for her sake; to

[1] Serm. i. *De Assump.*

compose some excellent work in her praise, and so to draw many others to her service: again, to maintain poor scholars, in a way to be preachers or religious men, with this obligation, that they shall make it their study, all their lives, to preach her greatness, to promote her service, and to draw all the world after her. To make her a present of Masses, Communions, fasts, disciplines, and other mortifications; but, above all, to imitate her glorious virtues, and to regulate our lives accordingly. If you do these, and the like things, and do them with a good heart, you need not fear Purgatory will do you any great harm. She will obtain for you such a measure of true contrition, such a proportion of love and conformity to God's will, so much patience in your last sickness, such holy and ardent desires to serve God, such profound humility: in a word, such heroic acts of virtue, as to blot out of your soul what Purgatory was to have done, and put you in a present capacity to go directly into Heaven: and if an extraordinary pass should be necessary, who can better procure it for you than the Lady of the House, the Mother of the Judge, the Empress of Paradise, and Princess of the Universe?

§ 6.—*The sixth, an humble Patience.*

You that suffer great miseries in this world, may comfort yourselves with such precious sufferings: for, so[1] you be faithful to God; so you voluntarily embrace what God sends, in spite of impatience; so you submit to the laws of His sweet rigour which

[1] *i.e.* So that, or, if only.

chastises you; so you freely offer all your little all to this great Lord of all, the great All of the whole universe; so from time to time you be still letting fall some good word, to testify that your soul and your body play not at the same game, move not upon the same centre, but that while the one is oppressed and cries out, the other secretly praises the paternal goodness of Almighty God; so that you do all this, you may be confident there will be little or no Purgatory for you. Having a Purgatory in this world, there is no reason you should have another hereafter.

I learn this secret of St. Gregory,[1] who admires a paralytic that lay rotting on a straw bed, where he had lived so all his life; or rather, where he had died so all his life: his life being nothing else but a mere concatenation of hourly deaths. Servulus was the name of this poor wretch, who at his death was comforted with angelical music, and carried away by Angels to sing his own part in Heaven for all eternity. One of those that were present told St. Gregory, that at the hour of his happy departure out of this life, so sweet a smell was spread all over the little room where he lay, that he never felt the like; and that this continued, and was perceived by all the standers-by, until his holy body was laid in his grave, and the service ended. But you will say: Everybody cannot be so holy as this good man. Certainly they may, by the grace of God; for St. Gregory observes but four things in him, which you may command as well as he. First, he often

[1] Hom. 15, *in Evang.*

read the Holy Scriptures, to comfort his heart in his sufferings. Secondly, he gave a part of the alms he received of good people, unto other needy persons, and lodged poor pilgrims in his poor cottage. Thirdly, holy aspirations and devout breathings were often heard to proceed from him, which were like so many fiery darts shot into the Heart of God, and bringing thence the sweet air of Paradise to refresh his soul, which by such amorous entertainments found less trouble in her afflictions. Fourthly, he was sensible enough of his pain, and would complain of it sometimes; I say complain: do you think Saints have bodies of steel? But, between one complaint and another, he would be often thus sweetly interposing: O my God, I desire Thy will may be fulfilled in all things, and nothing else but Thy will! I am willing that Thou handle this my body, and all that belongs to me, according to Thy Divine pleasure, both in time and eternity.

Now tell me, dear reader, canst thou not do all this, as well as this poor paralytic, who lived for no other end but to be dying a lingering death all the days of his miserable and yet thrice happy life? Will you have a soul so holy, and so pliable to God's will, be thrown into Purgatory fire? Sure, said St. Austin, if He meant to damn us in the other world, He would not damn us in this to a hell of most loathsome and intolerable diseases. And I may say the like here: that if God meant to punish His servants in Purgatory after this life, He would not punish them here in a Purgatory of miseries. His goodness is not wont to punish the same fault

twice. Go into Hell and Purgatory, while you live,[1] cried St. Bernard; and you will be sure not to go thither after your death: for it is not reasonable that you should have two purgatories or hells. Alas! no; and this is the cause why God, to save His friends from those horrible torments of Purgatory fire, sends them good store of crosses and afflictions in this world which are nothing so painful, and yet are highly meritorious in His sight, whereas the other are but pure sufferings. Hear St. Chrysostom:[2] The tongue that praises God in the midst of afflictions is not inferior to the tongues of martyrs, and likely they may have both the same reward. If a man praise God, and give Him thanks in his sufferings, it is reputed as a kind of martyrdom; and would you have a martyr go to Purgatory, he that finds Heaven open and ready to receive him? For, as Emissenus says very well, the Heavens are not only open to St. Stephen, but unto all martyrs, and unto all that suffer and die with the name of Jesus in their mouths, constancy in their hearts, and fidelity in their souls. The works of patience, according to St. James, are perfect;[3] and that which is perfect, owes nothing to Purgatory; nor can Purgatory refine that which is already perfect, no more than our fire can refine gold of twenty-four carats, that is so pure as not to have the least mixture of dross or impurity.

[1] *In illud: Descendant in infernum viventes.*
[2] Hom. viii. in c. 3, *Ad Colon.*
[3] St. James i. 4.

§ 7.—*The seventh, Devotion for the Souls in Purgatory.*

Shall I deal candidly with you? One of my chief motives of publishing this treatise was to persuade you this truth, that one of the best means to prevent Purgatory is to have a great tenderness and a particular care to comfort the souls there, to spare nothing that can further their deliverance: in a word, to make yourself a general agent for this suffering Church, to solicit for their eternal rest. Take now the proofs of this assertion and the whole strength of my discourse.

1. Christ said, in plain terms: "With what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again,"[1] that is, you shall be dealt withal in the same manner as you deal with others. So that, if you have beat your brains and employed all your endeavours to help the souls in Purgatory, and have really delivered some before their time, it is but reason that this your charity should be requited with a like return, and with a hundred-fold besides, and Heaven at the end of it. Methinks your case is not unlike to that of the prudent Abigail. King David was so highly incensed against the ungrateful Nabal,[2] that he swore to pursue him and his whole family with fire and sword, and to turn all into ashes. For all this, Abigail ventured to meet him with a present, and did it with so good a grace, that she soon made up the breach, and saved all. For David, after some little dispute with his anger, grew calmer, forgave all, and so sent her away joy-

[1] St. Matt. vii. 2. [2] 1 Kings xxv.

fully in peace. The application is easy. It is true, you have played the ungrateful Nabal; you have offended God, so far as to provoke His high displeasure, so that He may seem to deal favourably with you, if He sends you into Purgatory; but you have withal played Abigail's part, in sending Him as many grateful presents as you have breathed out fervent prayers for the souls in Purgatory; and with these you have made your peace, so that you may look to be dismissed in peace into the Kingdom of Heaven.

2. Take a second reason, of St. Peter, who exhorts us above all things to have charity for one another, because "charity covereth a multitude of sins."[1] For, since it is the greatest charity in the world to help poor souls out of Purgatory, as I proved at large in the Third Survey, those that devote themselves wholly to this service may be confident so to cover their sins as to put them out of the reach of Purgatory fire. When Ghibellin had straitly besieged Guelph, Duke of Bavaria, and forced him to surrender his town upon such hard terms,[2] as that the women only were permitted to secure themselves, and to take away with them what they could carry upon their backs; but as for the men, they were to remain at mercy, exposed to the fury of the fire and sword—the good women, laying their heads together, found out this strange expedient to save their husbands, as well as themselves; for every one taking her husband upon her back, and what else she was able to carry about

[1] 1 St. Peter iv. 8. [2] Palud. l. 2. c. 70.

her, they marched out of the town. Never was man so struck with astonishment as Ghibellin was at this sight; and, though he might have disputed their passage, as not consisting with the true meaning of the articles, yet was he so taken with so rare a stratagem and strange example of a true conjugal love that he suffered them all to pass freely, to the admiration of the whole world. And, surely, we may hence conclude, that all those who have so much love for the poor souls in Purgatory as to carry them, as it were, upon their backs, out of their miserable thraldrom, will find Heaven's gates open, and all the blessed spirits ready to receive them with acclamations of joy, for so sweet an excess of charity.

3. It is not possible that they who have been thus ransomed out of Purgatory by the ardent zeal of their friends here, should not hold themselves obliged to restitution; to return, I say, the like charity to the souls of their benefactors, when they leave the world. How can those happy souls, that swim in the ocean of overflowing charity, choose but employ all their power and interest to make them so? But sure I need not go about to multiply reasons in a case so clear of itself, so full of piety and heavenly fitness. I will only mind you of what I told you elsewhere out of Cajetan, how reasonable a thing it is that all those holy strays, or wandering suffrages, which are offered up for such souls as are not in Purgatory, should be applied unto them that had a particular affection and devotion to help souls out of that fiery dungeon; and this certainly will

be a means to fetch them out quickly, if they ever come there.

§ 8.—*The eighth, to be a great Alms-giver.*

The eighth means to prevent Purgatory, is to be very liberal and tender-hearted to the poor. The Holy Ghost teaches us as much, in most emphatical and comfortable words; some whereof I have chosen to lay down before you, with a desire to imprint them in your hearts. "Blessed is he that understandeth concerning the needy and the poor; the Lord will deliver him in the evil day. The Lord preserve him and give him life, and make him blessed upon the earth: and deliver him not up to the will of his enemies. The Lord help him on his bed of sorrow."[1] These words need no gloss. For what is this evil day but the day of Particular Judgment at the hour of death? Since it is the great critical day, and the most considerable moment, upon which eternity depends. Now, he tells us, that God will deliver him this day; from what, I pray you, if not from eternal fire, and from the dreadful fire of Purgatory, according to the measure of his charity and liberality to the poor? He tells us again, that He will make him happy in this day; out of which I conclude, that he shall not go into Purgatory; for how can he be happy that day, if he lie in flames of fire? Call you this to deliver a man from evil, to plunge him over head and ears in a fiery gulf? St. Chrysologus spoke with a grace when he said[2] that charity will

[1] Psalm xl. 1—4. [2] Serm. 8.

not suffer a great alms-giver to be laid in fire, but will appeal from the sentence and move God to cancel His own decree; and, in a word, will have him to be saved: and all this with so sweet a violence, says the same Saint, that God had rather alter His decree than contristate mercy and charity when they plead with such power for a great alms-giver. Let us hear the Holy Ghost once more, I pray you. "Water qnencheth a flaming fire, and alms resisteth sins; and God provideth for him that showeth favour: He remembereth him afterwards, and in the time of his fall he shall find a sure stay. . . . Son, bow down thy ear cheerfully to the poor: be merciful to the fatherless as a father, and as a husband to their mother; and thou shalt be as the obedient son of the Most High, and He will have mercy on thee more than a mother."[1] O God, what sweet words are these! When he is about to fall he shall find a sure stay; when he is ready to sink into Purgatory he shall be held up: he shall be strengthened, he shall be raised above the firmament, he shall be carried into Paradise. What! would a loving mother do less, if it were in her power? And since God has given us His word, that He will be more than a mother to such charitable souls, that is, have a greater tenderness and love for them, is it credible that He will suffer them to fall into Purgatory? or, if justice require some satisfaction there, is it not likely that all means will be used to remove them out of hand?

[1] Ecclus. iii. 33; iv. 8, 10, 11.

The Cæsars crowned themselves with laurel, as fancying it to be a sure protection against fire from heaven; but I may safely say, that a merciful soul, all covered over with laurels, olive-branches, and refined gold of charity, cannot be struck with fire from heaven, and has as little reason to fear the fire of Purgatory.

It is better, said St. Chrysostom,[1] to give alms to the poor than to work a miracle, or to raise a dead man; for in this you are beholden to God, but in that God is beholden to you. And therefore, since God is indebted to you, tell Him plainly you will be paid with no other coin but that of Paradise. If He thinks of sending you to Purgatory, tell Him you will be first paid what He is pleased to owe you; for He has promised you life everlasting: and, therefore, let Him first place you in Paradise, and you will have leisure there to talk of Purgatory. It was an answer worthy of eternal memory, that of the good Count Thibaud of Champagne. A poor gentleman fell at his feet, with tears in his eyes, saying: "My lord, you are the father of the poor; I have two daughters to marry, and have no way to compass it, having nothing in the world to give them; those poor creatures are utterly lost, if you take not pity on them and me, your most humble servant, and therefore I beseech your honour to have mercy on us." The two poor young women were all this time on their knees, as beautiful as the sun, their eyes humbly cast down upon the ground, and their faces covered with a

[1] Hom. 39, *Ad Pop.*

modest and virginal blush; when out steps a ruffian-like courtier, his name was Arrant, and rudely tells the poor gentleman, it was a pretty sight, indeed, to see him beg an alms with his sword by his side. Besides, he was to know that the Count was not for nothing surnamed the Bountiful; for he had given away so much, that he had no more left to bestow. "How!" replied the Count, "that is not so; I have yet something left, God be thanked, and enough too to bestow upon the good gentleman; for I am willing to part with thee, and to yield up unto him all the interest I have taken in thee." "So, take him, friend," continued he, "and be sure you do not part with him till he has bestowed both your daughters." This he said; and it fell out so in good earnest, for the courtier was glad at his own charge to provide competent portions for the two poor young women, and all France admired and highly extolled the Count for his prudent carriage of the whole business. Can you find in your heart to condemn such a brave Prince to Purgatory, after he has left many such charitable examples behind him? One, I say, that has given so much away in pious uses, that he has no more to give; one that would willingly have sold himself, after all, to make an alms of the price to our Blessed Saviour, in the person of those poor innocent doves.

The Angel Raphael deserves credit when he tells us, in expressive terms, that it is better to give alms than to lay up treasures of gold: because that is it which purgeth sin, and maketh us find mercy

and life everlasting.[1] How does your heart feel at this comfortable lesson? Since charity has the power to purge sin, what need of another Purgatory? And since she is so happy as to procure life everlasting, have you not reason to hope she will, at your death, set Heaven's gate open and lead you in thither, as it were by the hand? When those dutiful children[2] took their parents on their backs, to deliver them out of the flames which were furiously vomited out of Etna, to the terror of all Sicily, which seemed to be all on a light fire, they say the flames, out of respect to this natural affection, parted themselves and made a lane for the youths to pass through without harm that had so much love for their parents, whose age and feebleness would have otherwise betrayed them to utter destruction; and so all, for company, were happily saved out of that furious purgatory. And certainly, if your charity take you up, if your mercy do but hide you in her bosom, when you shall pass through Purgatory the fire will be so courteous as to retire, and give way to your passage: they will set all the gates open for you to get out when you please, and bring you the keys of Paradise.

§ 9.—*The ninth, Angelical Purity.*

The ninth, and a very efficacious preservative against Purgatory, is a special chastity, or virginal purity. I cannot think that a pure and humble heart, a soul that is newly divorced from a virginal

[1] Tobias xii. 8, 9. [2] Val. Max.

body, can ever be tied to purging flames. The diamond of chastity has, I know not what, that makes it victorious over flames. This Mount Libanus, as white as snow, is never visited with fire from heaven; this virginal laurel, which triumphs over the pleasures of this world, fears not the fury of any subterraneous flames; this St. John may be plunged into boiling oil without feeling the least smart; this royal salamander can live untouched in the midst of fire; this pure gold suffers no detriment in the crucible; this eagle cuts her way through the element of fire, and soars up to heaven without singeing her wings; these innocents sing merrily in the furnace of Babylon, as if they were in terrestrial Paradise. In earnest, there is no reason that persons, as chaste as Angels, who were invincible and untouched in the flames of concupiscence, which devour almost all the world; there is no reason, I say, that those who were proof against these subtle alluring flames, should not appear as good proof against these other cruel, devouring flames, or they should ever feel the smart of the one that had so valiantly overcome the false flatteries of the other. St. John says that virgins follow the Lamb wheresoever He goes; they are the ordinary courtiers of Jesus Christ, that have washed their robes in the Blood of the Lamb. And shall such clean, innocent souls need the help of Purgatory fire to wash away their stains? St. Teresa once seeing a canon in the Church ready to be laid in his grave, and another time one of the Society, who was also laid upon the bier, ran instantly to kiss their dead corpses: and when all were astonished

to see her, she told those whom it concerned, that she was very certain that those two reverend persons were virgins, and that their happy souls had for that cause taken flight into Heaven, just as they parted with their bodies.

The Greek History[1] tells us that when, in the heat of the tyrant's persecution, Nicomedia fell to the plunder of the rude soldiers, amongst others they took a young maiden; and having in vain laboured to make her sacrifice unto idols, they threatened her with a base and cruel alternative. She, on her part, begged leave to speak a word or two to Anthimus the Bishop. To him she proposed this case of conscience, whether she might not rather choose to die, or to be accessory to her own death, than lose the precious pearl of her purity. The good Bishop made her so doubtful an answer, that she could not well determine what he meant. Hereupon she is hurried away instantly, when the following expedient came into her thoughts. Seeing one of the plundering soldiers, she speaks thus to him, "Friend, I promise to teach thee a receipt that will make thee immortal, whereby thou shalt become the most valiant and famous man living; the secret is dear to me as my honour and my very life." He answers her he was content, so she could but make her words good. "Sir, I have," says she, "a precious ointment, which is of so great virtue, that whosoever is anointed with it, can receive no harm. A thousand rude blows or desperate thrusts of a sword cannot do him the least hurt against his will." "How shall I

[1] Cedren. *Annal.*

believe this paradox," replies the soldier, "which you speak possibly only to amuse me, or rather to abuse me?" "Sure you will believe it," says she, "when you see it tried before your eyes." Away she goes, borrows a little oil of the next lamp she meets with, returns instantly, shuts the door, bares her neck, rubs it well over with this miraculous oil that is to make people immortal; then casts herself down on her knees, and bids the soldier sure to take good aim, and strike boldly, and spare not; for he should soon see a fair trial of this wonderful experiment. With this she casts up her eyes smilingly towards heaven, and begs of sweet Jesus, her beloved Spouse, that the oil might have the effect she much longed for, to preserve her pure. Meantime the soldier lifts up his sword, and with all his might levels it at the neck of the innocent virgin, and in a trice strikes off her head, which lay reeking in blood, a good distance from the rest of her body. Never was man so amazed and confounded as this soldier, to see himself thus fooled. But let us leave him to vent his fury by himself, and fall to considering this prodigious courage, this exceeding love of purity, this ingenious stratagem of the young maiden: this innocent murder, or harmless contrivance of her own death, in obedience to a particular instinct of the Holy Ghost, as we may piously imagine; and, having taken a full view of all these circumstances, let us see whether we have the conscience to condemn the young lady to Purgatory fire, who was so chaste as to choose rather to die than part with her virginal integrity.

Which of you, said the Prophet Isaias,[1] can dwell in devouring fire without burning? Answer: It is chastity. Which of you can carry fire in his bosom, or lie in the bosom of fire, without hurt, cried Solomon?[2] Answer: It is chastity. Again: Which of you can walk upon firebrands or tread upon glowing coals, as upon a bed of flowers? Answer: It is a virginal chastity. Witness St. Agnes, who lay smiling in the midst of a most cruel fire. Witness St. Thecla, who could walk as confidently upon hot burning coals as if they had been roses. Witness St. Apollonia, who made nothing of leaping into a dreadful fire which was prepared for her. Witness a thousand other virgins, who were seen to triumph in flames of fire, as if they had been in the empyrean Heaven. You may remember the most chaste and incomparable virgin, Restituta,[3] who, being condemned to be burnt alive, was for that purpose put into an old ship, full of pitch, brimstone, and fire, and thus exposed to the mercy of those merciless elements. She appeared in the midst of the sea, as in a floating fire, upon her knees; and there she breathed out her sweet soul into the hands of her Heavenly Spouse, leaving her virginal body still entire, and without suffering the least detriment by the smoke or by the fire. Now, it was the fire of Divine love that gave her the mortal wound; no other fire durst touch or consume that virginal flesh which was consecrated to her dear Saviour, by the fair hands of chastity. Go; cast me such a soul into

[1] Isaias xxxiii. 14. [2] Prov. vi. 27, 28.
[3] Mart. Rom. 17 May.

Purgatory fire, and let it do its worst, and burn her if it can. No; fire will sooner melt a diamond, and all things that are the most impossible will sooner come to pass, than a pure and angelical virgin shall feel the smart of tormenting fire; which has the discretion, says St. Chrysostom,[1] to distinguish innocency from guilt, and to fly furiously upon the one, while with veneration and reverence it fawns upon the other.

§ 10.—*The tenth, a profound Humility.*

It cannot enter into my head that a soul which is truly humble shall ever enter into this place of torments, much less be long detained there. They say there is a bird, that will be sure to save herself in all occasions of danger, by sinking down so low into the water, as to be out of all reach. The soul of a man that is truly humble sinks down so deep into the centre of her own nothing, that there is not the thing under heaven that can come near her, to annoy her: and if, by chance, a little Purgatory fire should be let down upon her, it would do by her, as they say, the fire which falls from heaven does by a piece of well-disposed mould, which is so far from burning and destroying it, that it converts it into some precious stone. The great God of Heaven, Who loves to crush the heads of ambitious persons, to lay them level with the ground, and to grind them to powder, takes pleasure to raise humble souls out of the dirt, to make them prime potentates of Paradise, and to sit among the princes

[1] Hom. *De tribus innocent.*

of His Heavenly Kingdom. He that would be sure to find the glory of the Saints, said St. Dorotheus,[1] must seek it in the bosom of humility; for there, and only there, all true joy, content, and happiness are to be found. Paradise will sooner stoop down to Purgatory than suffer an humble soul to lie burning in those merciless flames. Would you, says St. Chrysostom,[2] pass quickly through the raging and tempestuous ocean? Be sure that humility be your pilot. When St. Paul took himself for no better than the dust of the common streets, then it was that he was rapt up to the third Heaven. True; and I may be bold to tell you, that if you be but humble, they will not easily make you stoop so low as Purgatory, but will rather lift you up above the wings of Seraphim. The Royal Prophet made it his prayer to God to look down upon his humility, to consider his labours, and to blot out all his sins, and make him as innocent as an Angel, or a child of a year old. What has an Angel or an infant to do in Purgatory?[3] Some hold a man that is very humble to be a kind of martyr. Must martyrs be sent like criminals, to broil in Purgatory? No, no, says Climacus,[4] rejoice not that you have the gift of miracles, like an Apostle, or that you tread all the devils in Hell under your feet; it is a greater advantage to be humble, and to have your names written in the golden book of humility. Shall such as stand in competition with Apostles be sent into Purgatory? There are stones of so

[1] Serm. i. [2] Hom. 38, *Ad Pop.*
[3] St. Doroth. Serm. 2, *De Humil.* [4] *Grad.* 25.

happy a temper, that though they should lie a thousand years in a hot furnace, they would not be the worse for it, but become still more fair and beautiful. Behold the true emblem of humility. Purgatory will be sooner turned into Paradise than do an humble soul the least prejudice. Esther, whose very name carries humility, was ready to die when she saw the majesty of King Assuerus; she humbled herself, and lay prostrate at his feet: and what followed? They were so far from putting her to death, according to the laws of the kingdom, that they placed her in the Queen's throne, and made her one of the greatest princesses of her time. When God sees a soul that is humble in good earnest to lie prostrate at His feet, He has not the heart to condemn her to death or to torments. "My friend," will He say, "mount up higher; it is not your place to lie there, melting in Purgatory: mount up higher and do it boldly; for I love to raise those high that humble themselves low, and of the children of Abraham, who esteem themselves no better than a little dust, I make the stars of my firmament and the Angels of My Paradise." It is a strange thing to see that poor Lazarus, humble and contemptible as he was, comes no sooner to die, but the Angels do him the honour to conduct him into Abraham's bosom. And the Good Thief, who had scarce any other virtue to plead for him but a little humility, to confess himself a vile wretch, as he was, did scarce find himself in the other world, but he found himself in Paradise. So true it is, that God loves humility;

and that all the Heavens stand open to entertain those that are truly humble.

§ 11.—*The eleventh, to Communicate well and often.*

I should never make an end, should I go about to bring in all the heroical virtues which are strong antidotes, and powerful preservatives, against the fire of Purgatory: and yet I cannot choose but vent a thought or two more, which, with the rest, I submit to your discreet judgment.

And first, I take those that communicate often, and do it well and worthily, to be pretty secure from feeling any great smart in Purgatory. St. Ignatius had reason to style the Holy Eucharist the antidote of immortality.[1]

The Romans used to put a piece of silver in the dead man's mouth, and verily believed that, by giving this for his passage, he should be conveyed safe to the Elysian fields. This was a vain superstition; but you must give me leave to fancy that when a good Christian dies, with his Saviour in his mouth, or in his heart, all Paradise lies open to receive him. "Open your gates, you princes of Heaven; open your gates, for behold the King of Glory is ready to make His entrance;"[2] in the triumphant chariot of virtues, sitting in a heart as white as ivory, which serves Him for His royal throne. Roger, King of Sicily,[3] having long laboured in vain to make himself master of the Island of Corfu, at length, tired out with so long a siege, fell

[1] Epist. *ad Ephes.*

[2] Psalm xxiii. 7. [3] *Hist. Neap.* l. i. p 2.

upon this noble stratagem. He makes as if a nobleman of the town were dead in his camp, who desired to be buried within their walls, with the rest of his ancestors. He was accordingly laid upon the bier, and covered like a dead corpse; a noble convoy was prepared to attend the hearse, with torches in their hands; nothing was wanting to make up a complete funeral. The town, mistrusting nothing, set open their gates to let them in; but my counterfeit dead man was scarce got upon the drawbridge, ready to enter the town, when, behold! he suddenly changes the whole scene; revives, and starts up with his sword in his hand, which was a sign for all his attendants to throw away their torches and to betake themselves to their weapons: and they managed them so well, that they first took the gate, and then the town, and the whole island, to the great terror and astonishment of their enemies, who found themselves gulled and surprised with so unexpected and so unusual a ceremony. A grave prelate terms the Holy Eucharist the incordiation of God;[1] as if he would have said that God, in this Holy Sacrament, is as it were incorporated into our hearts, and our hearts into God; so that God lying thus hidden within us, He that is Lord of the celestial Jerusalem, to which our hearts have laid so close and loving a siege, if we present Him to the blessed inhabitants, as dead for the love of us, they dare not but admit Him, and them also that carry Him, after this manner, in the very centre of their hearts and souls.

[1] Paris, *Lib. de Euchar.*

Upon occasion of a hot contest at Florence, about Savonarola, when some would have him an heretic, others not, there were two, amongst others, who took a strange resolution to put it to the trial of the fire: and he that could endure the flames better, was to be thought to have the better cause. The day agreed on being come, the fire prepared for the purpose, and all the world longing to see the success of this strange challenge, it was discovered that one of the parties had hid the Blessed Sacrament in his bosom, believing that the fire would not hurt him while he carried so precious a treasure about him. What came of it, and what was the conclusion of the whole business, you may read at leisure in the history itself. I only bring this, to show the man's confidence in this powerful preservative; and then you may please to remember, how the Sacred Host has been sometimes seen to hang in the air, surrounded about with flames, and thus to have been miraculously preserved. I know we are not always to look for miracles of this nature, and yet, methinks, we may be confident that Purgatory fire will have nothing to do with a soul where Christ has been pleased to take up His constant lodging. Where the King is, there is the Court; where Christ is, says Synesius,[1] there must needs be good fortune and victory; where God is, says St. Austin, there is Paradise. Nay: though you were in the deepest pit of Purgatory, God would not deny you entrance into Heaven, who never refused to entertain Him in your heart; He never

[1] Syn. Epist. iii.; Aug. *De Gen. ad litt.*

knocks at your door but you were still ready to receive Him: can you think He will be less courteous to you in the other world?

Besides all this, he that receives often and devoutly, receives withal such store of heavenly lights, such a tenderness of heart, such inflamed desires, so much innocency in his conversation, and so much purity of intention in all his actions; he is withal so transformed into God, upon Whom he feeds and feasts himself continually: he is so identified with Him, and, to use the phrase of St. Denis and St. Bonaventure, is so straitly united with God, that, as St. Paul speaks of them that cleave to God, he becomes one spirit, and, as it were, one thing with God. This being so, will you have this heart, which is but one thing with Christ, to be swallowed up in Purgatory, and so carry Christ thither? They say Albertus Magnus held, and, whether he held it or no, I know many other worthy persons maintain, that one single thought of the most bitter Passion of our Blessed Saviour is so powerful and so effectual,[1] that a man may gain sometimes more by it than if he had fasted with bread and water, or disciplined himself every day till blood comes, or read over daily the whole Psalter. I mean not to examine now the truth of this assertion, according to the rigour of divinity: I only say that in some sense it may be true, and this makes very much for my present purpose. For there is not the thing in the world that is a more lively representation of the Passion of Christ, than

[1] Granad. *De Orat.* De Ponte, *Medit.*

the Blessed Sacrament, which He left expressly as an eternal memorial of His Passion: commanding us to remember His Death and bitter Passion, when we receive Him, and still acting in our hearts that sad tragedy, though without the effusion of His Blood, and imprinting in our souls the several passages of His most precious Death. Of what merit, then, must a Holy Communion be, and a Communion which is often frequented, and continued till the hour of death? If such as these go to Purgatory, sure there will be none free. St. Thomas tells us the Blessed Sacrament is called a pledge of eternal life. "Now," says he, "we never use to deliver up our pledge, until we are possessed of the thing for which it was engaged; see then," saith he, "that you part not with the Body of Christ unto His Eternal Father till He has received you into Paradise, for which It was given you as a most precious and secure pledge." Hence it is that St. Ambrose[1] styles it a parcel of eternal life, an essay or taste, a certain infallible assurance of enjoying it: and St. Cyprian[2] calls it an infusion of the Divine Essence, and St. Bonaventure a wonderful deification, a metamorphosing of the heart, by which a man that communicates often is so deified that he seems to be a little god upon earth. And to such as he it is said: "You are gods, and the sons of the highest."[3] Go now, and bury these little gods in Purgatory: you will sooner work a miracle, and turn Purgatory into Paradise;

[1] Ambros. *Opusc. de Sanct. Sacram.* [2] Cyp. *De Cœna Dom.*
[3] Psalm lxxxi. 6.

for certainly Purgatory cannot be a fit place for those that are gods by participation, or consorts of the Divine Nature, as St. Peter[1] terms them. If the sheep's teeth that feed upon a certain herb in Candia seem to be made of pure gold, what must we think of those that are daily nourished with this Divine plant of Paradise, *Lilium convallium,* but that they have hearts of gold, consciences of gold, and so pure and refined gold, that the fire of Purgatory can find nothing more to purify and refine in them?

§ 12.—*The twelfth, a faithful and exact Obedience.*

The twelfth and last means to prevent Purgatory which I intend here to propose, is an exact and faithful obedience; for I cannot persuade myself that a true obedient person will have much cause to fear Purgatory.

Elias flew up to Heaven in a fiery chariot; how could he do it without burning? Very well; for he did it to obey God. The three children went into the Babylonian furnace; alas! they are lost creatures. No; for they went in to obey God. This being so, be of good comfort: the fire knows not how to arm itself against obedience. Jonas lies three days floating in a whale's belly: sure he is undone, the poor man will never appear more. He will, he will; and quickly too: for though it was his disobedience which made him a prey to that devouring monster of the sea, yet he now willingly submits to the decrees of Heaven; and, were it to

[1] 2 St. Peter i. 4.

do again, would as willingly cast himself in, to obey the will of God; and since it is so, he will infallibly recover his liberty, and not lose the least hair of his head.

Moses walks in the bottom of the Red Sea, while the waters stand like mountains on both sides, threatening death and destruction. Alas! it were great pity so worthy a person should be thus lost in waves. Fear not; there is no danger. No; since he entered to obey God, neither the sea nor death dare attempt anything against him: all the elements have too much respect to his obedience, to do him the least injury. Daniel is in the lion's jaws: who put him there? Obedience. Fear nothing; he will not perish: the cruel lions will be his lifeguard, to protect him. Behold Susanna, under a cloud of stones ready to hail down upon her; who put her there? Obedience to the law of God. And therefore do not fear, she will come off untouched. All creatures do so highly honour the commands of their Creator, that they will sooner forget their own nature than forget to obey Him and honour all those who had rather die than disobey. It is a kind of martyrdom, says St. Thomas, to die for obedience; and, without question, Purgatory was not made for martyrs. It is a perfect holocaust, to sacrifice his life upon the altar of obedience; and why should a heart, thus burnt and consumed in obeying, be any more exposed to fire? St. Bernard, in his funeral sermon of Humbertus, says that if that holy monk had anything to suffer in Purgatory, it was for want of a

little obedience in that which concerned the care of his health; and that, otherwise, he could not but think that he went immediately into Heaven. Let us hear the great St. Ambrose.[1] Whosoever, says he, does the will of God, Who lived and died in obedience, shall not die eternally; but at the hour of his death shall hear those comfortable words which were spoken to the Good Thief: "This day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise." Why so? Is it not sufficient that St. Ambrose speaks it so roundly? But, if you will have a pertinent reason for it, take this. The Angelical Doctor,[2] having first laid down this position, that all eminent and heroical virtues put a soul into a most pure and perfect state, says further, a man can give God nothing that is of more value in this miserable life than to consecrate his will, and submit it not only to Him, but, for love of Him, to frail creatures, perhaps ignorant, hasty, and choleric, perhaps younger and less understanding than himself, perhaps his own scholar, his own son, and, if you will, haply his own servant. Is not this a sublime kind of martyrdom, which ends not in a moment or with one dint of a sword, but must endure a thousand strokes of an indiscreet tongue, which go more to the quick, and this all the days of his life? Now, is there any reason why a man that has courageously suffered all these martyrdoms, should be martyred again in Purgatory fire?

When Abraham, out of pure obedience, would have sacrificed his dear Isaac, God seemed so well

[1] In Psalm xxxix. [2] 2. 2. q. 186. a. 5.

pleased (I had almost said obliged to him for it), that by way of requital He made a solemn oath to give him His only Son, and the land of promise, flowing with all manner of delights. Tell me, is not every obedient person another Abraham? nay, is he not greater than Abraham? since it is a far harder task for a man to sacrifice himself, than to sacrifice his son: to sacrifice, I say, his will, the noblest part of man, which is born to be sole empress of the universe, and has no other life but to rule and command, as well in the great as the lesser world? Now, let him be but another Abraham, and sure you will not think it fit to send him to Purgatory who carries in his bosom the delights of Paradise? The Abbot Mutius, when he turned monk, brought his only son with him to the monastery, about eight years old, that he might begin betimes to learn the fear of God. The Abbot of the monastery, to make trial of his obedience, peremptorily commands him to take the child and throw him into the river, for he did nothing but disquiet the monks. The holy man, without disputing the case, animated with an angelical obedience, and a heart like that of Abraham, takes up the child, runs away with him to the river, throws him in, and returns again with dry eyes and without any sign of trouble, as if he were not at all concerned for the loss of his own child. And certainly the child had been drowned, had not certain monks, who could swim well, lain secretly there, by the Abbot's appointment, who took up this little Moses, saved this Isaac, and brought him

back to the monastery, where they all stood in admiration of so perfect an example of blind obedience and self-denial, in so natural and lawful an affection as is the love of a parent to his dear child.[1] The same day it was revealed to the Abbot that this act of Mutius was as pleasing to God as that of Abraham, and that he should be eternally blessed for it. Go, now, and cast this soul into Purgatory, who stuck not to cast his only son, I mean his obedience, into the river, at the command of his Superior; and when you have done this, will they not sooner, think you, cast in the whole river, which was thus blessed by a perfect act of obedience, and so quench the flames, than suffer her to lie burning there? Mutius did but once cast his son into the river, and how many religious souls, out of the same spirit of obedience, expose themselves a thousand times to all dangers both by sea and land: and, after all this, must they needs visit Purgatory in their way to Heaven?

It seems boldly said by St. Austin,[2] that the Blessed Virgin was happier in obeying God than in being the Mother of God: and yet Christ Himself said as much in express terms. For when, by way of applauding Him,[3] they were crying up her as blessed and happy that had the honour to be His Mother, and to nourish Him with the milk of her breasts, He at once replied that He accounted them to be happy indeed that heard His Word and put it in practice. And,

[1] Cass. l. 4, c. 27.
[2] Tract. 10, *in Joan.* [3] St. Luke xi. 27, 28.

another time,[1] when they had told Him that His good Mother and His brothers stood without, waiting for Him, "Who," said He, "are My brothers, and whom do you call My Mother? Whosoever does the will of My Father, he is My mother, My brother, and My whole parentage." Now, to our purpose: if an obedient servant has the honour to bear this honourable title, of being the brother, and even the mother, of God, can God so far neglect this brother and mother of His, as to leave them in Purgatory fire?

The Abbess one day commanded St. Catharine of Bologna,[2] that for the love of God and the exercise of obedience, she should enter into a burning furnace. The Saint runs away instantly, and doubtless would have thrown herself in, had not the Religious stood in the way to hinder her. It is not a crime, says St. Austin,[3] to be thus prodigal of our lives, and even like Samson, to make ourselves away, when God requires it. No: this is no crime, but a pious holocaust, offered upon the altar of obedience: and will you then kill a man that is already dead? Will you burn him in Purgatory that is already consumed in the holy flames of obedience? God does not use to punish, or purge, the same fault twice; and therefore a soul that has been once purged in the fire of obedience, hath no need of being purged again in the fire of Purgatory.

Oh, what a thing it is to be obedient, cried

[1] St. Luke viii. 21.
[2] Lib. i. vitæ ejus. [3] *De Civ.* c. 1.

Gerard, as he lay a-dying in St. Bernard's arms. I have been carried before God's high tribunal, and have seen the power of obedience: nobody shall ever perish that is truly obedient, but, when he comes to die, shall mount above the choirs of Angels, Archangels, and Apostles, according to the merit of his obedience; and, with this, he died. Must Angels, Archangels, Apostles, and those that are in the same degree of perfection, be thrust into Purgatory fire? Is it reasonable that they should be confined to so loathsome a prison that made themselves voluntary prisoners under the severe government of obedience? I am resolved, said holy David, to fear no evils,[1] of what rugged nature soever they be, so long as Thou, my God, dost lead me by the hand. Though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death, in the very suburbs of Hell, which is Purgatory, I will fear nothing; for Thy rod, and Thy staff, wherewith Thou dost govern and direct me to do Thy holy will in all occasions, will be my sure comfort and protection.

An obedient man speaks nothing but victories, says the Holy Ghost, in the Proverbs.[2] What victories? Such as St. Dorotheus describes,[3] when he tells us that a soul, being seated in her triumphant chariot, drawn by humility and obedience, treads all under foot, and with a swift motion steers her course up to Heaven. If humility and obedience be her horses, they will not easily convey her into Purgatory; for they know not the way thither, but only into Heaven, their own native

[1] Psalm xxii. 4. [2] Prov. xxi. 28. [3] Doct. 1.

country, where they will be sure to leave this triumphant and victorious soul in the joyful fruition of eternal happiness. Take away self-will, and there will be no Hell, cries St. Bernard.[1] If obedience can put out hell-fire, she must needs have power to put out the fire of Purgatory. What a solid comfort must this be to religious souls, who have given themselves over to the practice of this virtue: and to all those that, living in the world, yet do nothing of their own heads, but are constantly ruled by the will of God?

It is a strange but very true observation of St. Gregory, and of St. Bonaventure,[2] that God, Who is invincible, will yet suffer Himself to be overcome by the obedience of His servants, so far as even to obey them. I say, obey; for it is the very expression He uses Himself in the case of Josue, who is said to have stopped the sun in his full career, because God was pleased to obey the voice of His obedient servant. If this be so, that God will refuse nothing of an obedient soul, let her ask Him to be freed from Purgatory; and she will not be denied it, who never denied Him anything. And without all doubt, it is as easy for her to curb the fire of Purgatory, as to stop the swift motion of the heavens. You, then, that are obedient, know your power; you may appeal from God to God, in case He should sentence you to Purgatory; you may boldly claim His promise of denying you nothing; and then you will be sure to insert in your bargain,

[1] Serm. 1, *De Resurr.*
[2] Bonav. *Reg. Novit.* tom. vii. c. 13.

to have nothing to do with Purgatory, but to go straight into Heaven, there to enjoy Him for ever.

The Conclusion.

It is now high time to conclude this section, and, with it, the whole treatise. And I cannot leave you better than in Heaven, whither I have brought you, if you will it yourself: for you see, it is in your power to make your way thither, without passing through Purgatory. Believe me, it is no trifling matter, but the most important business we have to do in this world, to purchase Heaven; and to purchase it so as to have right to take possession of it immediately after we have left this world. Christ our Saviour tells us, that the Kingdom of Heaven suffers violence, and that they must be both violent and valiant that run away with it. Whereon St. Ambrose[1] observes well, that God loves to be forced; and that they who importune Him most, and use the greatest violence, are the men He makes most of. Take courage, then, dear reader; take courage! Imitate the Good Thief; snatch Heaven out of His hands; steal away His Paradise; do something worthy of Him, worthy of yourself, and worthy of Paradise. If no better means occur to you, at least strive to be hugely concerned for the poor souls in Purgatory: pray often and devoutly for them, and procure that good store of Masses may be said for their relief. You have the ell in your hands by which you may measure out your own happiness, says the devout Salvian: be

[1] St. Ambrose, *in Luc.*

charitable to others, and they will be no less to you. The time is not long that is allowed you to sojourn in this world: in this little time, be sure you make the Saints in Heaven and the souls in Purgatory your friends, that they be obliged to help you in your greatest need. Learn, at least, by these discourses, to have a tender heart for the poor souls, and to use your uttermost endeavour to go yourself directly into Heaven out of this wicked world. It is the thing I earnestly beg of God's infinite mercy for you, and for myself, at the instance of your good prayers. For though I must acknowledge I have deserved nothing but hell-fire, and have reason to take it for a high favour to be sent into Purgatory, to lie there as many months and years as it shall please God, yet I confess ingenuously I have no great mind to either place, but only to Heaven; which I beseech God, by the merits of my dear Saviour, and by the Plenary Indulgence of His most infinite mercy, to grant us all. Amen.

Et fidelium animæ per misericordiam Dei requiescant in pace. Amen.

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